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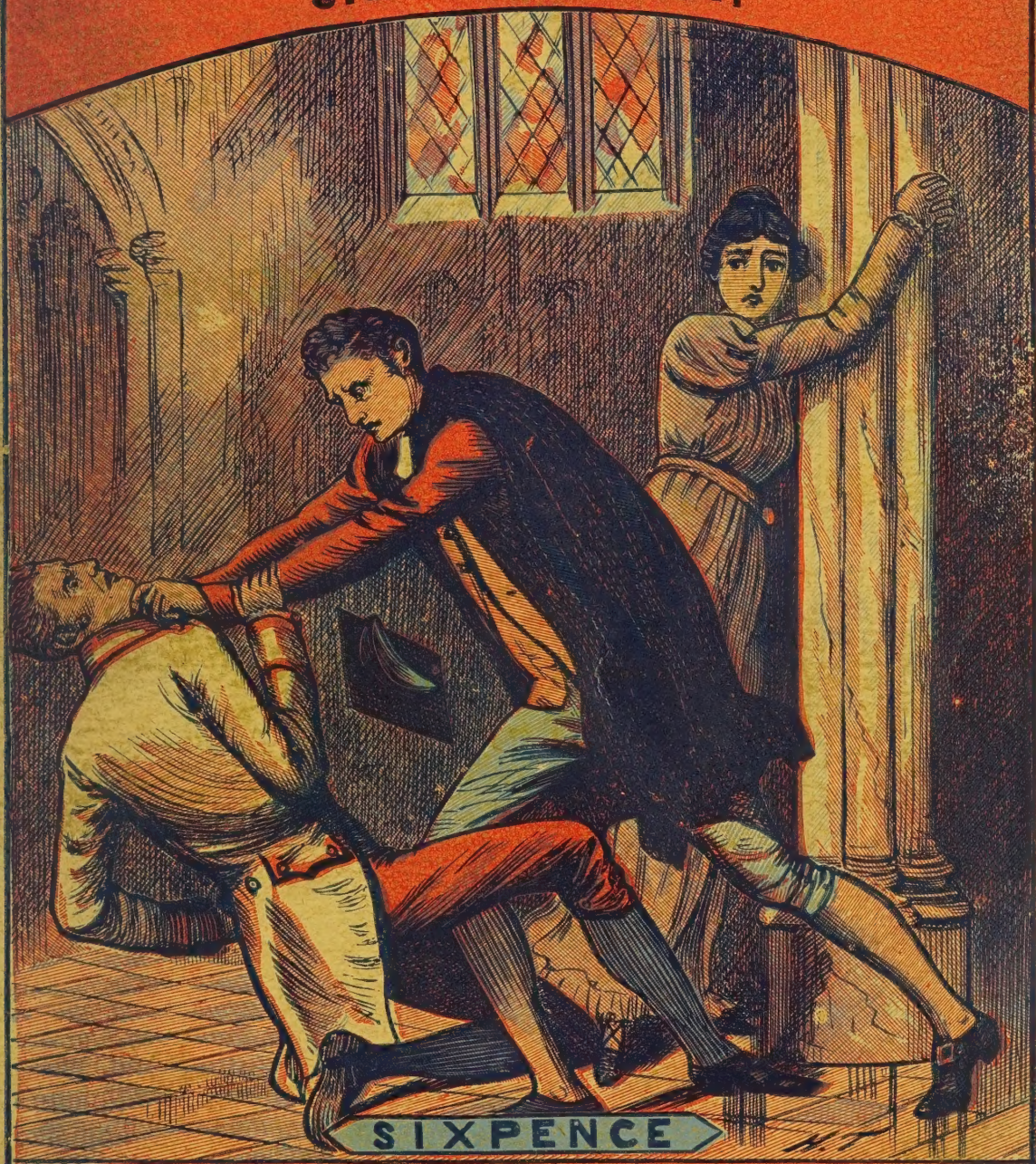
REGINALD DALTON

BY

J.G. LOCKHART.



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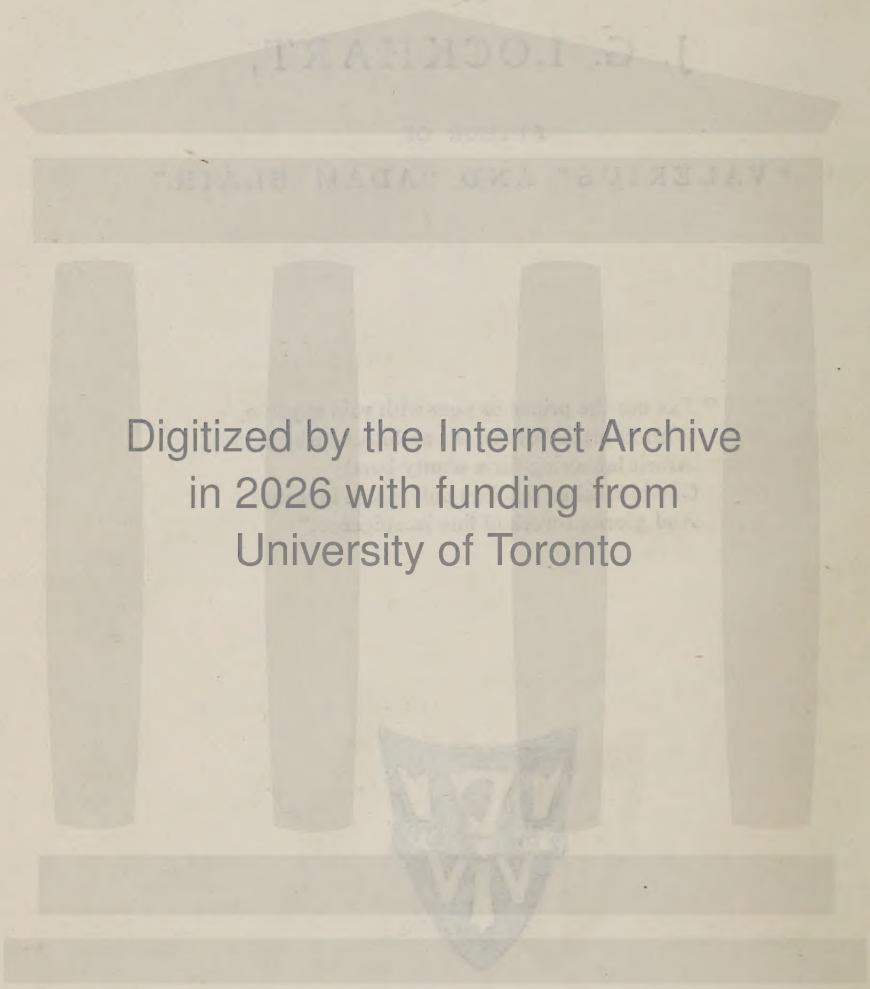
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CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCES THE HERO	1
II.	GRYPHERWAST HALL	2
III.	DREAMS! IDLE DREAMS	4
IV.	PRESENTS A BRIDE	6
V.	COUSINS	8
VI.	THE DREAM VANISHES	11
VII.	WHO WILL BE HEIR?	14
VIII.	RETROSPECTIVE	16
IX.	A VISIT IN PROSPECT	19
X.	THE GREEN SEAL	21
XI.	POOR BARBARA	24
XII.	AN OLD HISTORY	27
XIII.	DEPARTURE FOR OXFORD	34
XIV.	A SPILL	36
XV.	PLEASANT TRAVELLING	40
XVI.	AN AULD YET NEW ACQUAINTANCE	44
XVII.	GOWN *versus* TOWN	50
XVIII.	A STRANGE AWAKENING	54
XIX.	A RECLUSE	57
XX.	A SERIOUS DINNER AND A GAY SUPPER	62
XXI.	A COSTLY RIDE	67
XXII.	A QUIET CHRISTMAS	72
XXIII.	OXFORD SOCIETY	74
XXIV.	LETTERS FROM HOME	77
XXV.	ALAS, POOR LOVE!	81
XXVI.	"ELLEN"	86

CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
XXVII.	—THE FUNERAL	91
XXVIII.	—THE VICAR ADMINISTERS CONSOLATION	95
XXIX.	—A HALF CONFESSION	99
XXX.	—CONFUSING ALLUSIONS	103
XXXI.	—REGINALD RETURNS TO OXFORD	108
XXXII.	—A HAPPY MEETING	111
XXXIII.	—DUNS	114
XXXIV.	—DOUBTFUL FRIENDSHIP	116
XXXV.	—CHISNEY STRIVES TO SUPPLANT REGINALD	119
XXXVI.	—REGINALD BECOMES A SIZAR	121
XXXVII.	—FAREWELL	125
XXXVIII.	—THE DUEL	128
XXXIX.	—LOVE AND HONOUR	132
XL.	—ARRIVAL OF A FRIEND	136
XLI.	—CHISNEY PRONOUNCED OUT OF DANGER	139
XLII.	—AN UNEXPECTED MEETING	141
XLIII.	—REGINALD ATTENDS A BALL	144
XLIV.	—A QUARTETTE	151
XLV.	—MR. WARD ACQUITS THE CATLINES	154
XLVI.	—A BEVY OF BEAUX	157
XLVII.	—AN ELOPEMENT	160
XLVIII.	—A JOURNEY TO SCOTLAND	169
XLIX.	—A YOUTHFUL LOVER	173
L.	—A KINDLY REFUSAL KINDLY TA'EN	174
LI.	—A MYSTERY SOLVED	176
LII.	—TOM'S PERPLEXITY	182
LIII.	—A HASTY DEPARTURE	185
LIV.	—AN UNSUSPECTED DOCUMENT	189
LV.	—THE TRUE HEIR	193
CONCLUSION.	—UNITED	195

REGINALD DALTON.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCES THE HERO.

REGINALD DALTON had always a singular pleasure in recalling those images of perfect repose with which he was surrounded, at the remotest period to which his remembrance could go back—the little sequestered parsonage-house, embosomed among elms and sycamores,—the old-fashioned garden, with its broad turf walks,—the long happy days spent in bright sunshine by the side of the shining lake,—the unwearied kindnesses of the mildest and most affectionate of parents.

There are few of us whose oldest impressions are not, as his were, serene and delightful; and I, for one, cannot, I must confess, divest myself of a sort of half pleasing, half melancholy anticipation, that should age ever draw a defacing hand over the strongest lines imprinted by the stirring events of youth and manhood, the harmless treasures of infant memory—the "trivial fond records"—may be spared amidst the havoc.

Indeed, certain physiologists affirm, that the countenance of a man, after he is dead, is frequently found to have recovered much of the original expression it had borne, even although that had undergone signal changes, nay, perhaps almost entirely disappeared from view, during a great part of the newly-terminated life. This, if it really be as they say,—and, if I mistake not, both Lord Bacon and Sir Thomas Browne are among the number,—may, in all probability, be the result of strong natural struggles in the parting spirit to retrace, recover, or assert, what may appear, in such an hour as that, the most valuable, because the most innocently acquired, of all its fading, fast-vanishing possessions. And I own, there is, to my imagination, something very agreeable in the notion of Mind and Body thus, on the brink of long separation, making, as it were, mutual and sympathetic efforts to be once more as like as possible to what they had been in the first and best days of their acquaintance.

Young Reginald was brought up with as much tender care as if he had not been motherless. While a child, he occupied the pillow of his dead parent by his father's side; and to him might he well have addressed himself in the beautiful words of Andromache to her lord,—

"——I see
My father, mother, brother, all in THEE."

As he grew up, he was with him almost all the hours of the day, either as a pupil, or as a plaything. But, indeed, the last of these words would give a false idea of the nature of their intercourse; for the truth is, that the solitary man neither had, nor wished to have, any better *companion* than his only child. His intellect stooped, but it was not ashamed—perhaps it was scarcely conscious—of stooping. When they read together, for the first time, 'Robinson Crusoe,' 'The Seven Wise Masters,' the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' or any such manual, the delighted interest the father took in every incident was such, that the boy scarcely suspected him of having previously perused the book any more than himself.

Even during the few years that have elapsed since then, what an alteration has taken place in the choice of books for children!—Crusoe, indeed, keeps his place, and will probably do so as long as anything of the *adventurous* remains in the composition of the national character among a people, of whom Baron Jomini is so far right when he says, "tout homme est marin né;" but, with this exception, I think everything has been altered, and almost all for the worse. The fine Oriental legend of the Seven Sages is altogether forgotten, except among studious people and bibliomaniacs; and even the masterpiece of John Bunyan has been, in a great measure, supplanted by flimsy and silly *tracts*. The young mind is starved upon such fare as the writers of these things can supply. Instead of the old genuine banquet of strong imagery, and picturesque incident, by which the judgment was compelled to feed itself through the medium of excited and enriched imagination, a tame milk-and-water diet is now administered, which takes no firm or fervid grasp of the imagination at all, and which I should humbly conceive to be about as barren of true wisdom, as it certainly is of true wit. Even the vigorous madness of the old romances of chivalry, which used to be read aloud in the winter evenings, for the common benefit of young and old in a family, was better stuff than what is now in fashion; for

such reading, with all its defects, had a strong tendency to nourish many of the noblest parts of the intellect.

These opening years of life, then, flew over his head in the most unambitious peacefulness. He partook but little in the boisterous amusements common to children placed among characters, and in situations, of a more busy description; and it may be fairly supposed, that his early character partook largely both of the excellencies and of the defects which generally distinguish those educated entirely in the seclusion of the paternal fire-side. His modesty was blended inextricably with bashfulness; his uprightness with irresolution; his virtue depended on feeling much more than on anything like a basis of principle; and indeed, perhaps, almost all the good that was in him, consisted in nothing but the unconscious depth of his filial affection.

As to *education* (in the usual sense of the word), I believe that was conducted, on the whole, just to as much advantage, as it could have been had his father sent him, at the usual time of life, to Westminster or Eton. At first, the desire of pleasing his only instructor, was with him a motive quite as powerful as what is commonly called emulation could have furnished; and, after a little while, he scarcely needed any motive in addition to the pleasure he himself derived from the acquisition of knowledge. Their sequestered situation, and unbroken course of life, left him scanty means of diversion beyond what he could create for himself; and, fond as he was of rural sports, he soon discovered, that, of all such means, reading was at once the most effectual, and the most inexhaustible. His father's library was well selected, and contained not only an excellent collection of theology and classics, but a considerable store of the best French and English authors. He was a Martinet about his books, and was not fond of their being carried out of the room in which they were arranged; so that the cheerful busy mornings of Reginald's boyhood were spent almost entirely in the same apartment with his father, — and a pleasant apartment it was. The view from its windows commanded a rich landscape of lake, and wooded shores, and distant hills; but, at night, when the fire shone bright, and the curtains were drawn, there needed no better prospect than the comely rows of folios, with which the room was chiefly surrounded, could afford them. Comfort, and quiet, and sober cheerfulness, presided over their dwelling.

The reader might naturally have expected me to begin my hero's story with some account of the ancestors from whom he was sprung; but had I done so, I should have been anticipating information of which he himself possessed but little, until the years of his boyhood had drawn near their close. In fact, one of the first discoveries Reginald made for himself was, that Mr. Dalton disliked being asked questions about his family; and yet, to say nothing of his general demeanour, there was something about his manner of avoiding this very subject, which must have satisfied any one, that this reluctance proceeded from no feelings of conscious plebeianism.

However, from putting together broken hints and observations I suppose, Reginald knew well enough, in process of time, not only that his father was a gentleman born, but that he had relations of considerable consequence living in one of the neighbouring counties. That some coldness subsisted between Mr. Dalton and these kindred, was an inference which the lad could scarcely fail to draw, from the mere fact of the families having no intercourse with each other. Taking this distinct circumstance in connection with others of a nature less tangible, he began to suspect, and at length to believe, that the alienation he witnessed had had its origin in a *fault*. That fault, whatever it might be, he, of course, attributed *not* to his parent.

Some notions of this sort had imperceptibly taken possession of Reginald's mind, but the subject was, as I have hinted, one on which he was early taught not to question Mr. Dalton; and there was no one else near him from whom he thought himself likely to derive that information which his father had never chosen to supply. Perhaps, had he known that there were such persons near him, the lad would have hesitated very much about applying to them. Most assuredly he ought to have so hesitated, for, by making any such application to a stranger, he must have betrayed an unseemly want, either of reliance on his father's judgment, or of confidence in his father's kindness. As it happened, there was no such temptation, either to be indulged, or to be resisted.

Of Reginald's mother (who, as we have seen, was dead before he had passed his infancy), Mr. Dalton spoke almost as rarely, though not so obscurely, as of his own connections. He gave his son to understand, that she had been born in a condition of life below his own; but that she had been the gentlest, the best of wives; and Reginald had too much reverence for his father's feelings, to inquire farther. These, however, were, I believe, the only topics, in regard to which the Vicar of Lannwell was accustomed to treat his son with anything like reserve.

CHAPTER II.

GRYPHERWAST HALL.

In relation to the former of them, he was indebted to a mere accident for a great increase, both of his knowledge and of his

perplexity. I suppose he might be rather more than fifteen years old, when, one day, Mr. Dalton having gone abroad on some of his parochial duties, the youth was sitting alone, reading, as usual, in the library. A servant brought in a packet, which had been sent from the nearest market-town, and laid it before him on the table. From the shape of the packet, Reginald perceived that a book was the inclosure; and, as there was no seal, he, without hesitation, cut the cord which secured it.

He found, as he had expected, a new book; but it was one of a species by which he was then too young to be much attracted at first sight. It was a History of the County of Lancaster; a large folio, full of Latin characters, and other heavy-looking materials. He turned, however, with more pleasure to the engravings at the end of it; and after amusing himself for a while among views of Lancaster Castle, Furness Abbey, the college at Manchester, and the like, at length lighted upon a print, the title of which effectually rivetted his attention—"GRYPHERWAST HALL, the seat of Richard Dalton, Esq." A shield of arms was represented underneath, and Reginald recognized the motto, the crest, the very griffin of his father's seal. "Hah!" said he to himself, "have I at length discovered it? Here, then, is the seat of my kinsmen, the home of my forefathers! Was it under these very roofs that my ancestors were nursed? Was it indeed under these venerable oaks that they loitered?"

Reginald gazed upon the image of this old hall, until he had made himself intimate with every projecting window and tower-like chimney belonging to it, and then it occurred to him all at once, that there might be some letter-press in the heart of the book, bearing reference to the prints at its conclusion. In what a flutter of zeal, after this idea had struck him, did the boy turn over the huge leaves;—with what delight did his eye at length catch again, at the head of a chapter, the names of *Grypherwast* and *Dalton!*

To save my reader the trouble of referring to a book, which, if he be not a Lancashire squire or rector, is most probably not in his possession, I shall tell him, in a very few sentences, the amount of what Reginald here found expanded over a goodly number of long pages. He found, then, a prolix deduction of the Dalton pedigree, from which it appeared, that the family had been distinguished enough to furnish a sheriff and knight of the shire, so far back as the days of John of Gaunt; but that their importance had risen very considerably under the Eighth Henry, in consequence of sundry grants, which that monarch had bestowed upon the existing squire, at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries. The Daltons lost these lands again, under Mary; but it seemed that, on the accession of her sister, the donation of the bluff monarch had quietly, and as of its own accord, resumed its efficacy. From that period, Reginald Dalton had followed Richard, and Richard had followed Reginald, in regular succession, from father to son—a long line of respectable knights and esquires, who for the most part contented them with taking care of the family possessions at home, and leaving to cousins and younger brothers, the honour of supporting in arms the ancient reputation of their name. But the last paragraph was that which the young Reginald read with tenfold interest.

"The present representative of this family, and proprietor of Grypherwast-Hall, is Richard Dalton, esquire, formerly M. P. for the burgh of ——. This gentleman married Elizabeth, daughter of —— Fairfax, Esq., and widow of the late Charles Catline, Esq., by whom he has issue, one daughter, Barbara. Mr. Dalton is now a widower; and failing his daughter Barbara, the nearest branch of the family is his cousin, the Reverend John Dalton, vicar of Lannwell *parva*, Westmoreland."

Reginald had read this last paragraph, I take it, a dozen times over—then ruminated on its contents—and then returned to it again with yet undiminished interest; and the book was, in short, still lying open before him, when he heard the sound of his father's approach. The Vicar seemed to be trotting at a pretty brisk pace; and, without taking time to reflect, the boy obeyed his first impulse, which was, to tie up the parcel again, so as to conceal that he had looked into the book.

It was not that Reginald felt any consciousness of having done wrong in opening this packet—that he laboured under any guilty shame—that he was anxious to escape from the detection of meanness. Had twenty letters, addressed to his father, been lying before him with their seals broken, he was entirely incapable of looking into one of them. He had had, at the moment when he opened the packet, no more notion, intention, or suspicion of violating confidence, or intruding upon secrecy, than he should have had in taking down any given volume from the shelves of his father's library. His feeling simply was, that he hastily indeed, and almost involuntarily, but still by his own act, put himself in possession of a certain piece of knowledge, which, for whatever reason, his parent had deemed it proper to withhold from him. To erase the impression that had been made on his mind, on his memory, was impossible; but to save his father the pain of knowing that any such impression had been made there, appeared to be quite possible; and so, without taking time to balance remoter consequences or contingencies, Reginald followed, as I have said, the first motion of a mind, the powers of which had hitherto acknowledged the almost undivided sway of paternal influence, and from no motive but one, of filial tenderness for his father's feelings, he

endeavoured, as well as he could, to restore to the packet its original appearance.

Having done so, he awaited his entrance quietly, with a book in his hand. Dinner was served up shortly afterwards, and they quitted the library together without Mr. Dalton's having taken any notice of the packet.

Soon after the repast was concluded, he rose from the table, and Reginald heard him re-enter the library by himself. Perhaps half an hour might have elapsed, when he rung his bell, and the boy heard him say to the servant who obeyed the summons, "Go to Master Reginald, and tell him I want to speak with him." There was something in the manner of his saying these words that struck Reginald at the moment as unusual; but the man delivered his message with a smiling face, and he persuaded himself, ere he rose to attend his father, that this must have been merely the work of his own imagination.

When he entered the library, however, he perceived, at one glance, that there was heaviness on his father's brow. "Reginald," he said in a low tone of voice, "I fear you have been guilty of deceit—you have been trying to deceive your father, my boy.—Is it not so?"

Reginald could not bear the seriousness of his looks, and threw his eyes upon the table before him; he saw the packet lying open there, and then again meeting Mr. Dalton's eye, felt himself to be blushing intensely.

"You need not speak, Reginald," he proceeded, "I see how it is. Look, sir, there was a letter in this packet when you opened it, and you dropt it on the floor as you were fastening it again. It is not your opening the packet that I complain of, but when you tied these cords again, you were telling *a lie* to your father. Yes, Reginald, you have told a lie this day. I would fain hope it is the first you ever told—I pray God it may be the last! What was your motive?"

Poor Reginald stood trembling before him—alas! for the misery of deceit! Conscious though he was that he had meant no wrong—conscious though he was that had he loved his father less tenderly, had he revered him less awfully, he should have escaped this rebuke at least—his tongue was tied, and he could not muster courage enough even to attempt vindicating himself by the truth.

Involuntarily he fell upon his knee, but Mr. Dalton instantly bade him rise again.

"Nay, nay, Reginald, kneel not to me. You humble yourself *here*, not for the sin, but the detection. Retire to your chamber, my boy, and kneel there to HIM who witnessed your offence at the moment it was committed." He waved his hand as he said so, and Reginald Dalton for the first time quitted his father's presence with a bleeding heart.

By this time the evening was somewhat advanced; but there was still enough of daylight remaining to make him feel his bedchamber an unnatural place for being in. He sat down and wept like a child by the open window, gazing inertly now and then through his tears upon the beautiful scenery, which had heretofore ever appeared in unison with a serene and happy spirit. With how different eyes did he now contemplate every well-known feature of the smiling landscape! How dull, dead, oppressive, was the calm of sunset—how melancholy the slow and inaudible waving of the big green boughs—how intolerable the wide steady splendour of the lake and western sky!

I hope there is no one, who, from the strength and sturdiness of his manhood, can cast back an unmoved eye upon the softness, the delicacy, the open sensitiveness of a young and virgin heart—who can think without regret of those happy days, when the moral heaven was so uniformly clear, that the least passing vapour was sufficient to invest it with the terrors of gloom—of the pure open bosom that could be shaken to the centre by one grave glance from the eye of affection—of the blessed tears that sprung unbidden, that flowed unscalding, more sweet than bitter—the kindly pang that thrilled and left no scar—the humble gentle sorrow, that was not Penitence—only because it needed not Sin to go before it.

Reginald did not creep into his bed until the long weary twilight had given place to a beautiful star-light night. By that time his spirits had been effectually exhausted, so that slumber soon took possession of him.

But he had not slept long ere he was awakened, suddenly, but gently, by a soft trembling kiss on his forehead; he opened his eyes, and saw Mr. Dalton standing near his bed-side in his dressing-gown. The star-light, that showed the outline of the figure, came from behind, so that the boy could not see his father's face, and he lay quite quiet on his pillow.

In a little while Mr. Dalton turned away, but ere he did so, the boy heard distinctly, amidst the midnight silence, a whisper of *God bless my child!*—Reginald felt that his father had not been able to sleep without blessing him—he felt the reconciling influence fall upon his spirit like a dew from heaven, and he sunk again lightly and softly into his repose.

CHAPTER III.

DREAMS! IDLE DREAMS!

WHEN Reginald entered the breakfast-parlour next morning, he was received by his father just as if nothing particular had occurred the evening before. The Vicar was not merely as kind, but as cheerful as usual;

and the boy, ere the morning was over, had been sitting by his side, not only reading in the Lancastrian folio, but asking him an hundred questions about the old castles and churches engraved for its decoration.

I need scarcely say, however, that Reginald abstained from Grypherwast Hall; although the reader can be at no loss to believe, that had he followed his own inclinations, he would have been more inquisitive concerning that print than any other in the volume.

But if the boy did not say anything as to that tacitly forbidden matter, we may be sure he did not think the less of it. In truth, from that day forwards he dreamt of it by night, and wove out of it by day the materials of many an endless dream. Living, as he had done, in a world of inaction, and accustomed to draw his subjects of thought from anything rather than the witnessed workings of actual nature, it was no wonder that his fancy should even at this early period have addicted itself to the latter tempting species of amusement. In point of fact, Reginald was seldom at a loss how to occupy himself, provided he had but a tree to sit down beneath. His eye continued open to the scene before him, but by degrees ceased to convey any impression of external images to the mind within. That flew far away on luxurious wings. The last romance or poem he had read, furnished Imagination with all she required—and now, the habit of reverie having been thus formed, it was an easy matter for the youth to dream new dreams, and revel amidst new romances, of which his idle self was the centre and the hero.

Of what texture these were, the sagacious reader will scarcely require any explanation. Where but at Grypherwast Hall should be the scene? Who but Miss Dalton should be the heroine? Reginald's fancy, of course, portrayed to him the heiress of his ancestral domains, as the most lovely of her sex. Of her age he had derived no hint from the book; but he soon settled that she could not be older than himself. No, she must just be a fair, blooming, innocent creature, in the first blush of maiden beauty, wandering, like a second Una, amidst those reverend groves, and wherever she wandered, like Una herself,

> 'Making a brightness in the shady place."

How simple seemed the issue—how completely according to the established course of things in the world of Romance! The male heir of the house of Dalton, the rightful representative of all that generous lineage, how should he fail to be enamoured of the beautiful virgin inheritrix of his house? And she, the daughter of all the Daltons, could *she* hesitate for a moment between any other suitor and the young kinsman, in whose person the whole of her own lofty ancestry was represented? Prosaic must the soul be that could contemplate any termination but one—a few difficulties indeed there might, nay, there ought to be—a few months, perhaps even a year or two, of impediment, and probation, and struggling bosoms—for that would be but the natural "course of true love;" but all these things would soon be over; Nature, which had formed them for each other, would triumph—the two yearning young hearts would be united for ever, and the knightly halls of Grypherwast, how they would be in a blaze with festive exultation! How glorious would be the hour when Love had joined what envious Law had striven to separate, and the just Heir of Dalton stood proclaimed and asserted by his power the Lord of Grypherwast!

So did the imagination of Reginald expatiate. It was so that

> "The happy boy would creep about the fields,
> Following his fancies by the hour, to bring
> Tears down his cheeks, or solitary smiles
> Into his face, until the setting sun
> Wrote Fool upon his forehead."——

Happy could the early power of wrapping one's spirit in the folds of merely ideal felicity, and of transporting one's self at a wish beyond the influences of reality, be formed and indulged without any worse consequence than the mere waste of time! But, alas! such sickly and precocious banqueting enervates while it consumes. The energy that should be reserved entire for life and substance, is lavished on nothings, ere its value can be estimated; that becomes too soon the exercise which kind Nature meant for relaxation; and he who has given the bright hours of his opening fancy to Reverie, must struggle hard with himself ere he can chain the full vigour of his intellect to the oar of Necessity.

Reginald's great want was a companion of his own time of life; but unfortunately for him, in that sequestered and thinly-inhabited district, this was a want not likely to be supplied, even had it been felt. The only gentleman's house in their immediate neighbourhood, had stood untenanted for a long series of years, and Mr. Dalton, although living on the best possible terms with his parishioners, had never encouraged his son to cultivate any very intimate connection among the families of the few small *statesmen* who were resident near the vicarage. Indeed, the young man's education had been such, that it was not at all likely he should have of himself sought much of that sort of society which their domestic circles could afford. In earlier days, his father and his books had been everything to him; but the natural restlessness of a young mind soon demands other exertion than can be supplied by reading, and by the conversation of persons more advanced in life. Reginald, as we have seen, became a dreamer. The world of action, the mind of his contemporaries, were shut

out from him—and he had recourse to what he could create for himself. In the mean time, however, it is not to be supposed that his studies were neglected; on the contrary, he continued to apply himself to his books, if not with the full fire of his own first undivided zeal, at least so as to give perfect satisfaction to his father; and so far as mere scholarship went, perhaps there were not many youths of the same age, whose attainments would have entitled them to look down on Reginald Dalton at the opening of his eighteenth summer. In every other particular, how different was he from young men of that standing, brought up amidst the hurry and excitement of the living world—in many things, how great was his advantage over them—in not a few, how deplorable his inferiority!

It was in the beginning of that summer that THORWOLD, the neglected manor-house to which I have already alluded, began to assume the long absent appearances of life, bustle, and preparation. Mr. Chisney, the proprietor of this place, and of extensive estates in its neighbourhood, had come of age about three years before, but having some possessions in the south of England, had not as yet visited his ancient inheritance. But he had now married; and the expense all of a sudden bestowed upon Thorwold, seemed to intimate his intention of making the Hall his permanent residence for the future.

The expected advent of the principal family of the place, more especially after the absence of a long minority, was of course an affair of great interest; and even in Lannwell parsonage a considerable sensation was produced by its first announcement. Mr. Dalton had the church new white-washed; orders were issued for repairing and beautifying (to use the churchwarden's phrase) the Thorwold Gallery, which had for seventeen years been abandoned to the use of farm-servants; and even about the parsonage-house itself there were sundry symptoms of preparation. As for Reginald, the village tailor lavished all his barbarity on a new suit, and the young man looked forward with a strange mixture of curiosity and reluctance to the prospect of mingling at length in that sort of society, to which, notwithstanding his fine pedigree, he had hitherto been a stranger.

It was on a bright Saturday's evening that the little belfry of Lannwell church sent forth its most lively peal in honour of the arrival of the Chisneys. Reginald and his father were sitting together, and the Vicar, being in a very communicative humour, told a variety of stories about the young squire's father, and other members of the Thorwold family, whom he had formerly known. Among other things, Reginald found out that the Chisneys and the Daltons had intermarried about a hundred years before. Such and so profound was that respect for the notions of *cousinship*, into which he had nursed himself for some time back, that he felt quite astonished how his father could have so long concealed a matter of so much importance. In fact, he lost no time in mounting his hobby-horse, and long before he went to bed that night, he had furnished the great romance of Grypherwast with a very pretty episode from Thorwold Hall.

CHAPTER IV.

PRESENTS A BRIDE.

BOLDLY and gaily, however, as Reginald could dream, he hung his head very sheepishly next day, when he found that the long deserted gallery, over against the Vicar's pew, was really filled with a blaze of fine ladies and gentlemen. In the course of the sermon he stole a few glances, and I believe had sense enough to satisfy himself that none of the bright eyes of that high sphere were in any danger of being fixed upon him. But, in truth, Reginald was an odd mixture, and there is no saying what sillinesses might have passed over his fancy.

The young squire and his bride, ere they got into their carriage, received very graciously the congratulations of Mr. Dalton; and Reginald heard after they came home, not a little to his discomposure it may be supposed, that his father had accepted for them both an invitation to dine in the course of the week at Thorwold. Indeed, I take it our young gentleman wasted about as many meditations on that dinner, ere he went to it, as a young lady generally does on the coming ball at which she is to come out.

It must be quite unnecessary to say, that he bestowed on the toilet of that great day a double, ay, a treble portion both of time and attention, and almost as needless to add, that when he had done, his appearance was infinitely more awkward than usual. Had Reginald presented himself at that time in any company, drest just as he was accustomed to be when he was wandering at his ease among the woods, he could scarcely have failed to be regarded with some admiration. He was naturally very handsome, and this, too, in a somewhat uncommon style of handsomeness, considering his race and his country; for though his eyes were of that clear, grave blue, which is seldom seen but in the north, the general cast of his countenance, both as to features and complexion, was rather what a painter would have called Italian. A profusion of dark chestnut curls lay on his forehead, the dancing blood of seventeen was in his cheek, and his lip, just beginning to be shaded with down, had that firm juvenile richness, which so rarely survives a single season of debauchery, or even of dissipation. His figure was light and nervous, and there was even a certain elegance about its motions,

although Reginald had never had one single lesson in fencing, and I believe only about a dozen in dancing, from an itinerant professor of the name of O'Leary. But as I have hinted, the young man was at great pains on this occasion in spoiling his own appearance. Nothing could be more absurd than the manner in which he had combed his fine hair back from the forehead it was meant to shade and to grace; and as for the new suit of clothes, it has been already insinuated that old Nathaniel Foy was an artist who had never sewed at the knee of any of the Stultzes.

According to the old-fashioned manners of the northern counties, the families who had in former times been intimate with the Chisneys, began, immediately on the arrival of the young couple, to pour in visits of congratulation; so that Mr. Dalton and his son, the day they went up to Thorwold Hall, were ushered into a drawing-room, crowded as well as gay. Groups of smiling young men and women were clustered about the windows, while high-looking old ladies sat apart on sofas, nodding and whispering; and rosy-gilled esquires, with well powdered curls, and capacious white waistcoats, stood sturdily in the middle of the floor, talking toryism and horse-flesh, and now and then looking at their watches.

Reginald had scarcely begun to recover himself from the flurry into which the first glimpse of this animated scene had thrown him, ere the door of an antechamber was flung open, and the young squire entered, leading by the hand his pretty and languishing bride. In a moment there was such a bustle of bowing and curtseying, presentation, congratulation, and compliment, that nobody had any leisure to take the least notice either of him or of his confusion. Dinner was announced very soon afterwards, and it is impossible to say how much he was relieved, when he found himself seated at table between a couple of hearty old fellows, who had too much respect for business, to think of troubling him or anybody else with conversation. When he looked round him, and saw the easy assurance with which beaux comported themselves to belles, how did his heart sink within him beneath the overwhelming consciousness of his own rawness! He knew he was blushing, and of course blushed on deeper and deeper; but luckily he durst not refuse the champagne, which was continually offered him, and so, in the course of a few bumpers, his nerves acquired, in spite of him, some strength, and his cheeks some coolness.

As for "the happy pair" themselves, the moon of bliss had not yet filled her horn, so that there was little chance either of their observing the awkwardness of their youthful guest, or of their being displeased with that (or indeed with anything else), had they observed it. Mr. Chisney was naturally rather a sombre-looking person (very sallow, and not a little marked with the small-pox); but at present the whole of his air and aspect was instinct with a breath of buoyancy and mercurialism—it seemed, indeed, as if he now and then were making an effort to bear himself gravely, and look like himself; but the next moment his wife's eye and his would meet, and the conscious simper resume all its predominancy. The young lady, however, was perhaps even more absurdly happy than her lord. Her eye-lids were cast down from time to time with a very pretty air of shyness; but whenever she lifted them again, the irrepressible sparkle of glee was quite visible. The tones of her voice were fortunately very soft and liquid, so that the frequent giggle in which she indulged was by no means so intolerable as that of a newly-married young woman most commonly is. A bluff boisterous old boy of a baronet, who sat at her right hand, made a thousand apologies for being so antediluvian as to propose a bumper to their health the moment the cloth was removed; but even this trying incident produced no worse consequences than a charming blush and a tenfold titter to carry it off. As she sailed out of the dining-room, in the rear of all her female convoy, her small ring-laden fingers received a gentle squeeze *en passant*. When elderly people play such honeymoon pranks, it may be difficult not to laugh; but here a person of any bowels would scarcely have permitted himself even to smile.

Mr. Dalton was too much of a gentleman not to have been at his ease, and too good-natured a man not to have been pleased at such a party as this; but poor Reginald came home from it with many more of painful than of pleasurable recollections. And indeed had this been otherwise, he must have added the original sin of dulness, to the unfortunate accident of *mauvaise honte*.

Neither Mr. Chisney nor his lady had, as we have seen, taken almost any notice of the Daltons the first time they visited them; but ere long, they had rather more leisure upon their hands. The bustle of formal congratulation could not last for many weeks—any more than the intoxication of their own spirits;—and both of them, before the summer was over, were of opinion it was a very pleasant circumstance that the parsonage of Lannwell was within so very easy a distance of Thorwold Hall. Mr. Chisney, who was really a man of very good sense, found that there was nobody near him with whom he could live more agreeably than with the Vicar of his own parish; while the young lady, after her husband had given up spending *all* his mornings in her drawing-room, began sometimes to feel a little weary of herself, her pianoforte, and her flower-drawings, and deigned to discover that Reginald was genteel in spite of bashfulness, and conversable in spite of his reserve.

To polish a fine young man, is a task which, perhaps, no woman at all capable of

executing it, ever enters upon with much reluctance. The modesty of Reginald flattered her vanity; it was delightful to be listened to with so much submission by one who knew so many things that women never know, and for which women have therefore so great a respect—one who displayed, in the possession of what is commonly called knowledge, all the charming humility of ignorance and inexperience. Besides, Reginald Dalton was really a very handsome young fellow, and but for the unhappy cut of his coat, it was easy to see that a very little training might convert him into a beau, of whom no lady, married or unmarried, need be ashamed.

"Much blood, little breaking," is a maxim with which every sportsman is familiar, and the same thing holds good in regard to ourselves. In the course of a few weeks, Reginald Dalton could present himself at the Hall, free not only from all the painful, but almost from all the awkward, parts of his rusticity. He rode with Mr. Chisney, walked with his wife, and he and his father spent two or three evenings in almost every week at Thorwold. Rarely, perhaps, have the exterior manners of any young man undergone more remarkable improvement in so short a space. And, in truth, when Reginald himself looked back, and compared himself at the beginning of that year's autumn with what he had been at the termination of its spring, the difference was so great, that he might be pardoned for contemplating the rapidity of his own progress, with a very considerable share of complacency.

In one point of view, at the least, it was fortunate for Reginald that the young Squire and his lady were left so much alone during the greater part of that summer; for, had their house been from the beginning what it was towards the close of the season, he must have either derived fewer advantages from frequenting it, or purchased them at the expense of undergoing a much severer species of tutorage.

The shooting season had commenced several weeks, ere Mr. Frederick Chisney, the brother of the Squire, arrived at Thorwold. He was several years younger than Mr. Chisney; but he was already, in his own opinion, and in that of many others, the finer gentleman of the two. Everybody indeed is acquainted with that common saying, which has, time out of mind, furnished the vanity of cadets with some consolation for the comparative lightness of their purses; and in a limited sense, at the least, there is no question the saying has its origin in observation. Younger brothers, all the world over, have their wits sharpened by the circumstances of their situation; while the consciousness of perfect security has a natural tendency to encourage indolence of mind, as well as repose of demeanour. But, on the other hand, is there nothing to refine in the sense of importance and power? Do not these things exert, over happily-born spirits at least, a certain soothing and ennobling influence? And while the cadet has briskness for the bustle through which it is his business to fight his way, has not your elder brother, generally speaking, something far better adapted for the calmer sphere in which his birth has placed him? Though he be not, in the ball-room or mess-room sense of the word, the finer gentleman, is he not in reality the more mild in disposition of the two, the more *gentle* in bearing?

But Frederick Chisney was the younger brother all over,—full to the brim of all that vivacity and restlessness of spirit, which your "terrarum Domini" are so much the better for wanting—a bold, gay, sprightly, and ardent youth. He had already spent two years at Christ-Church, and having gone thither from Eton, was at twenty as free from exterior awkwardnesses as any man of forty, and, in his own opinion, quite as knowing in men and manners, as he could have been in reality, if double his years had passed over his head. He was a considerable coxcomb to boot—but, to be sure, he had whatever excuse a handsome person may furnish a coxcomb withal. Though tall and athletic in his form, his limbs had not as yet acquired the knit symmetry of manhood, but his countenance wanted nothing of its confidence. His complexion was remarkably fair and brilliant, and you might have sought all England over for a pair of brighter eyes. To a strong taste for literature, and intellectual accomplishments much more varied and extensive than are generally to be found among young Oxonians, even of the highest promise, Frederick Chisney united a violent passion for every manly sport and exercise, which few could have indulged as he had always done, without retarding the progress of mental improvement. But his keen spirit ever found its relaxation, not in repose, but in change of exertion.

Such was he—such at least he seemed to be—when fortune threw Reginald Dalton in his way. Our youth had already become in some sort the *Ami de la Maison* at Thorwold Hall, when Frederick Chisney arrived there.

CHAPTER V.

COUSINS.

THIS gay fellow regarded Reginald at first, as might have been expected, very much *du haut en bas*. For although a great many tastes and accomplishments were common to them both, Reginald was obviously and extremely deficient in respect to other matters, on his own proficiency in which Frederick chiefly piqued himself. The Oxonian, therefore, began with quizzing the rustic; but he

took all this with an unsuspecting simplicity, which, ere long, not only shamed Frederick out of his malicious amusement, but really excited feelings of kindness in his heart.

But above all, he found Reginald useful. Frederick, although he considered himself at least as much a man as his brother, nevertheless could not help, when they were together, feeling some little remains of the awe in which he had formerly stood of him, at a time when the difference of but a few years was important. The Squire, on the other hand, did perhaps continue to look upon his brother rather too much as a boy; and, in short, they were not accustomed to converse together on terms of perfect equality, although there was no visible want of brotherly affection on either side. The marriage of James, moreover, had given no great satisfaction to Frederick. The lady, as he thought, was not quite of that rank in which his brother should have sought an alliance, and he was inclined to regard her with something not unlike aversion, as a pretty Cheltenhamite who had done a very impudent thing in presuming to set her cap at Mr. Chisney of Thorwold. The perfect good temper of the girl softened this last feeling very considerably in the course of a little time; but still the mere domestic trio of Thorwold Hall was by no means to Mr. Frederick's mind, and he soon found the pleasantest way in which he could spend his morning, was shooting or fishing with Reginald, who, over and above the merits of a most devout listener, was as well acquainted with every stream and cover in the neighbourhood, as if he had been bred up on purpose for a poacher. And how indeed should he have been otherwise, having been, as we have seen, a solitary walker all his days, a "follower of his fancies through the fields"?

Friendship is, in truth, not less natural, and scarcely slower of growth, at that time of life, than love itself; and ere Frederick had been a fortnight at the Hall, he and Reginald were friends. How exquisite is the delight of young companionship!—how doubly exquisite was it to one who had so long lived sequestered, and all but alone! Every hour furnished him with new ideas, not transmitted from the world of books, nor sobered by the comments of age, but fresh from the moving world, reflected from a fancy as bright, as vivid, as glowing as his own. It seemed as if, in the course of a single day, at times, his mind had been enriched with the fruit and experience of years. What new unimagined desires were every moment springing up and strengthening within him—how he dreamt of the busy world! How brilliant, how charming, were the visions he framed of its doings—how earnest, how serious, was the thirst of kindled curiosity—how deep and fervent his longings—how happy the excitement! To be pleased, is the easiest and surest of all ways to please, and no wonder that Frederick was almost as happy as his pupil.

Much as Reginald's mind was occupied with these novelties, it is not however to be supposed that he entirely threw off his attachment to his own old courses of thought. No—those long-cherished dreams still kept their place. The favourite ground-work of fancy was retained, while every new image employed in its decoration served but to bind to it the more, and to lend new vigour to that which otherwise might have been exhausted.

In short, the old *Chateau-en-Espagne* was not only in excellent preservation, but receiving continually new outworks and new ornaments, when one morning Frederick Chisney came into the vicarage, immediately after breakfast, equipped, as usual, for a day of wandering in the woods. Reginald flung his bag over his shoulder, seized his fowling-piece, and was ready in a trice to set out with him; but just as the two young men were quitting the room—indeed Reginald was already in the lobby—Chisney halted, and said, "O, Mr. Dalton, I beg your pardon, I had very nearly forgotten to deliver my brother's message. There's a whole family of cousins of yours coming to dinner to-day, and they hope you and Reginald will come and meet them."

"Cousins of mine!" said the Vicar, his face flushing up.

"Yes, your cousins—are they not so? The Daltons of Grypherwast Hall. The old gentleman and his daughter are both coming to see 'the happy couple.' One of their servants is at the Hall before them."

Reginald's heart, you may be sure, was throbbing as if it would burst his ribs, but he could not help keeping his eye fixed upon his father's countenance; seldom, indeed, had it exhibited such symptoms of emotion—painful emotion. The colour was going and coming, as in the cheek of a poor maiden listening to a love-tale; but how different this scarlet from hers! As for Frederick, he was doing something about the lock of his gun, so he took no notice of all Mr. Dalton's perturbation, but said, after the pause had continued for half a minute—Reginald would have sworn for half an hour—"Well, I suppose we shall have the pleasure of seeing you at five o'clock. In the mean time, Reginald and I may pick up a leveret or two—allons, Reginald!" And with that he shut the door, and went whistling down the stair, Reginald following him, as if instinctively, but quite in the dark as to his father, and perplexed besides with the thought that no answer had in reality been made to the message from the Hall.

He had reached the threshold, when his father opened his door and called after him, but without showing himself—"Reginald, Reginald—do you hear me? Take care you come home in good time to dress for dinner."

The words were spoken quickly, but in the Vicar's usual tone of voice, and they relieved

Reginald from one part—and one only—of his troubles.

Our youth was often extremely absent in his manner, and this fault of his had by no means escaped the quick eyes of Frederick Chisney; but during the whole of this morning it was carried to an excess he had never before witnessed. In vain did he tell the best stories that had ever charmed the ears of a Common Room: Reginald smiled indeed when a sudden pause told him a smile was expected; he even laughed when an example was set him; but it was quite evident these were mere tricks of surface-work. His mind was obviously a thousand miles off. Though he loaded and reloaded his gun, fired, hit, bagged, and went through all the business of their sport quite as regularly and successfully as usual, he did this with just as little expense of thought, as if he had been a shooting machine.

Frederick endured it with patience for two or three hours; but at last he got quite sick of trudging up and down the fields by the side of a person who neither put questions at all, nor answered them as if he understood what had been said. So, taking his own dog with him, he plunged into a deep winding dell, where he thought he might have a fair chance of starting a pheasant, leaving Reginald alone in a wide stubble-field, which was bordered on one of its sides by this ravine. Reginald took no notice of his having gone off, until some minutes had elapsed, and by that time he had got much beyond his reach amidst the thick coppice-wood, and nothing was to be heard but the sound of the beck rushing over its rocky bed far below. The first shot Frederick fired was at such a distance, that Reginald perceived there was no great likelihood he should overtake him; so having had already at least as much sport as he cared for, he fairly sat down amidst the stubble, and continued there, for I think the best part of an hour, ruminating without interruption—his eyes wandering idly all the while over the woods and parks of Thorwold, stretched out below him—the breathless lake beyond, with its fringed shores—and the maze of mountains that on every part close the prospect, and seem as if they had been formed on purpose to shut in that quiet and beautiful little valley from the world.

In what a sea of dreams was he lost! what multitudes of old fancies, mingled with new, chased each other over his mind! Now would he imagine himself kneeling at her feet amidst the voluptuous mystery of twilight—how eloquently whispering, how softly heard, how ineffably answered! And then would come a gentle, speechless, sorrowful parting—and then the meeting of quick rapture—the joy of hope satisfied. The creature of his imagination was as familiar to him as if she had been a reality—it seemed as if every tone of her voice had a thousand times thrilled on his ear, as if her smile had penetrated to the centre of his heart.

He was still lying wrapt in the folds of this happy bewilderment, when his vacant eye happened to catch a glimpse of a carriage creeping slowly along one of the avenues of the Thorwold park. He started to his feet and gazed upon it, straining his eyes as if it had been in his own power to abridge, by strong volition, the effect of the distance. Yes, there were certainly four horses and postilions—there was an outrider a little way before—he could distinguish him here and there between the openings of the trees—there was an *imperial* on the top of the carriage itself—there could not be a doubt they were travellers—yes, this was the very party. A speck of white appeared for a moment at the window—ha, herself! the very drapery of his destined fair! After a moment the whole was lost to his view amidst the massy foliage of the beeches. Alas, alas, not one glimpse more! His eye was dim and hot, ere he withdrew it from the vain attempt, dropping the weary lids with the longest, deepest sigh, that had ever heaved his bosom.

He was yet standing like a statue rooted to the spot, when Chisney hallooed to him, and in a moment he was at his side.

"Well, Reginald, what cheer, my boy? What have you been doing with yourself all this time? I'm sure you have had no sport, however, for I must have heard you fire if you had."

"No, Frederick, I have not had a single shot since we parted."

"By Jupiter, I believe you are either a poet, or in love.—As I live you blush, Dalton! Where, in the name of all that is romantic, have you your goddess concealed? I thought I had seen every pretty face in the parish. Speak out, man, breathe the tender secret—I give ye my honour I shall respect your preserve."

"You're quizzing me, Frederick——"

"You're blushing, Reginald——"

"Blushing? Why you would make anybody blush; I'm no more in love than yourself."

"Perhaps that's not saying very much neither—but let it pass. You won't speak—mum as a dormouse. Well, take your own way. Murder will out—I shall discover it all in due time."

"For God's sake have done, man. I was only lying here looking at the lake."

"Only lying here looking at the lake! I'll tell you what it is, Dalton, your good father will make a booby of you for life, if he don't send you to Oxford—ay, and that the very next Michaelmas. Why, if you stay here much longer, you'll stuff your head so full of these meres and mountains, that you'll never be a man for the world while you exist. I wager you end in a sonnetteering parson, ordained at Carlisle under the proud designation of a *literatus*."

"I hope not, Chisney; my father was at the university, you know, himself."

"Well, well, the sooner you go to the university, or to some place where there is life and motion, the better for yourself and him too—that's all I shall say. What college was Mr. Dalton at?"

"At Queens'. I told you that once before, Frederick."

"Queens'! I protest I had forgotten that there was such a barbarous place in the world. You must never go to Queens', though—that's certain—Queens', ha, ha! depend on't, it will never do, sir. If you had only once heard that old cracked trumpet of theirs braying about their dead quadrangles for dinner, you would never dream of such a thing. 'Tis a Gothic place!"

"I thought the building had been Grecian. 'Tis so in my father's old Almanack."

"Pooh, pooh! you're a Goth yourself, man. I was not thinking of their confounded pilasters.—But seriously, I hope you will come to Christ-Church—that is to say, if they have rooms for you; but that, I am afraid, is very doubtful."

Here there was a little pause of a minute or so, during which Mr. Frederick kept his eyes on the ground with an air of great wisdom. He then pulled out his watch, and said gaily, "Come, Reginald, we shall scarce be in time for the Squire's dinner-bell—so we'll say no more of the Queens' folk's trumpet for the present. I shall certainly make bold to talk to the Vicar about you one of these days, however, and I think I shall be able to make *him* hear a little reason, whatever you may do."

With this the young sportsmen parted, Frederick going down the face of the hill towards Thorwold, at his usual careless swinging pace, while Reginald, with long hasty strides, traversed the lane leading to the vicarage. Every now and then he halted as he went, stood for a moment looking down into the park, and then proceeded again as rapidly as before; so rapidly, indeed, that ere he had accomplished half his walk, he had the misfortune to give his ancle a twist in the crossing of a stile, which unseasonable accident prevented him from arriving at Lannwell near so soon as he had otherwise done. Still, however, he was there a full hour before the time of dinner at Thorwold, so that there was yet "ample room and verge enough," both for dressing at leisure and for walking quietly, or even limping, if that should be necessary, to the Hall.

Great, therefore, was his surprise, when, on entering the parsonage, he was informed by the servants that his father had already set out for Thorwold, leaving word for the young gentleman to follow him thither at his leisure. This circumstance would have been of itself enough to perplex his thoughts, even had these been more orderly than they were. As it was, he was quite unable to form any feasible conjecture as to this apparently (it must be owned) strange proceeding on the part of the Vicar; but there were other matters on which we may easily suppose he could not prevent his meditations from dwelling with even greater interest. His fancy had 'metal more attractive' before it. Altogether, indeed, it was no wonder that his hand shook a little, and that one neckcloth did not suffice for that day's toilet.

At length, however, Reginald was done with his preparations; and, making every effort to subdue the violence of his conflicting emotions, or at least to banish their external symptoms, he began to walk towards Thorwold, along that spacious, stately, and sombre old avenue, which extends almost all the way between the manor-house and the village of Lannwell. There was something in the very gloom of the place that was not without its effect in calming the perturbation of his spirits, and he advanced, after a little while, with much composure, and indeed gravity of air. To say truth, in whatever way it was looked upon, he could not be blamed for feeling that this was a day—an occasion—of some importance to him. The degree of its importance, time and the event alone could show. The more he reflected, the more serious did he become; his efforts to acquire the mastery of himself were strong, and, all things considered, they were far from being unsuccessful.

It is true, that when he found himself clear of the avenue, his gathered recollection was for a moment very much disturbed. Nevertheless, although he did not dare to look up towards the windows, he walked right across the court, and there was no time for any more reflection, for he found himself in an instant at the threshold of the drawing-room.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DREAM VANISHES.

THE old butler, who happened to be the only servant at hand, was by this time so much accustomed to see Reginald at the Hall, that, being busy at the moment, as well as rather more gouty than usual, he did not think it necessary for him to take the trouble of attending the young gentleman up-stairs, and announcing him in due style:—so he had to make his appearance as he might. He opened the door very modestly, it may be supposed, and had been within the room for two or three seconds, ere any one took notice of him. In fact, there was as yet nobody there but his father, a gentleman standing beside him near the fire-place, and an old stately dame established close by them, in the chief chair of the corner, with her spectacles and newspaper.

It was the last-mentioned person whose eye

first lighted on the young man. She kept it fixed on him for a moment, and then, nodding very graciously, said, "Brother, where are your eyes? Here comes a young gentleman, who, I am sure, has no need to send his name before him."

Mr. Dalton of Grypherwast turned round immediately. "A Dalton, to be sure, if there's faith in Sir Joshua.—Why, cousin, your son looks as if he had stepped out of one of the picture frames in our old Hall."

So saying, the Squire advanced towards Reginald, took him kindly by the hand, and led him towards his sister, who had already risen from her seat to receive and salute him.

All this was done so suddenly, that Reginald had no time to think of anything until it was over. The old lady, besides, had called a tenfold blush into his face, by some commendations of his good looks, delivered in that hearty tone which an Englishwoman under five-and-forty would, whatever she thought, rather eat her fingers than make use of upon any similar occasion. But one thing there was, which, after a moment's pause, Reginald could not help being very much struck with—and this was neither more nor less than that Mr. Dalton of Grypherwast was a much older man than he had ever fancied him to be. Having only read and heard of him as his father's "cousin," he had, hastily enough, but perhaps not very unnaturally, conceived that he must be of course about the same age with his father. This had all along been quite a settled matter with him, and no wonder, therefore, that he was not a little surprised with being introduced to this cousin in the shape of a gentleman on the wrong side of threescore and ten.

The Squire's appearance, however, though his age was visible enough, showed no symptoms of anything like infirmity. He was evidently in the full possession of health and strength. His leg was still a strong leg, although perhaps not quite so neatly turned as it might have been at five-and-thirty, and his eye was not a whit dimmed in the midst of the wrinkles that surrounded it. In truth, the Squire was a singularly hale-looking old gentleman, for his years—grey, but not bent, fat, but not unwieldy. He was, as W. W. hath it,

> "An ancient man of purple cheer,
> A rosy man right plump to see;"—

but there was a fine rustic brown mixed with the red on his cheek, and altogether, although he had very much the air of one that had sat at good men's feasts enow, he was really no more like that worthy member of the Celtic Society, Sir William Curtis, than the haunch of a fine Ulswater buck is like a piece of the Durham ox.

The Squire's sister was as like himself as it is easy for a sister to be like a brother. They were nearly, as it seemed, of the same age—certainly there could not be more than a very few years between them, and these were, as they ought to be, on the side of the gentleman. Mrs. Elizabeth Dalton must have been a very comely, nay, a handsome woman in her youth; for she had even now the remains both of fine features and of a stately figure; if she had had any defect, it must have been, in all probability, in her air, which tended somewhat to the masculine. That might have been not quite so well in a young beauty, but now it was of but little importance. She was a generous-looking old lady, with bright dark eyes, and a good healthy colour in her cheek, though nothing that could be called a complexion, or suspected for rouge; she wore on her head an old-fashioned high cap, with long lappets of the most beautiful Brussels' lace; her ample person was invested in a gown and petticoat of very rich green silk, the massive folds of which scarcely allowed the tip of the toe to be visible, while from the long sleeves, fastened at the wrists with broad heavy bracelets of gold chased-work, and terminating in point ruffles, there peeped a pair of hands still far too neat for being kept continually in their gloves. Everything about Mrs. Elizabeth spoke of comfort, substance, and good temper; and, in a word, it must have required the tact of a very Beau Nash to detect in her appearance the smallest symptom of spinsterhood.

This cheerful pair of old people were both of them, in their several ways, as kind as possible to Reginald. They disputed together, with great earnestness, whether he was more like one or another of their ancestors—the Squire giving it hollow in favour of his own father as represented in his youth by Reynolds, and the lady being equally clear for Colonel Marmaduke Dalton, a cavalier who fell at the relieving of Newark Castle.

"Why, brother, do but look at the boy," said she. "I protest if you had had eyes in your head, you must have been struck with it at the first glance. Bless, me, 'tis the very face itself. Give him a Spanish hat, with a falling red feather, and put the least thing in the world of a mustachio on his lip——"

"Lord, how you rave, sister! Why, I'll take my bodily oath, that he's no more like the Colonel than you are."

"Ha, ha! you're out at length then, Dick; for I remember it as well as if it had been but a yesterday's matter—it was just about the time you came home from Paris, Sir Harry Roseter was staying a night or two at Grypherwast, and he said over and over again, that I was very like the Colonel's picture. I remember I took it as a compliment, so no offence to you, cousin Reginald."

"Clap a handsome wig and a lace cravat on him," said the Squire, "and you'd soon see what you'd see."

"To be sure I would," quoth Mrs. Elizabeth; "but I'll bet you a pair of gloves on it,

and here comes a third person to be judge—will you refer it to Barbara?"

"Refer a bet to Barbara! What are you thinking of now?"

Reginald turned his eyes with eager timidity towards the door. Mrs. Chisney was just entering the room, and along with her, to be sure, there was a lady.

But I shall not be so foolish as to make any attempt at describing it. Let it be enough to whisper into the reader's ear, that the *Château en Espagne* was gone, demolished, undone, utterly undone, in less time than I can put these words upon my paper. "The king rubbed his eyes, but there was not a vestige of Aladdin's splendour."

In place of Reginald's dear, darling dream—instead of his blooming blushing beauty—his Una—his angel of seventeen, there appeared a pale, sickly lady, whom the most poetic imagination in Christendom could not have conceived to be a bit under forty. In fact, Miss Barbara Dalton, the heiress of Grypherwast, was at this time in her thirty-seventh year; but indifferent health, and various other circumstances, had given her all the look of being a full half-dozen paces farther down the hill.

There was a very singular plainness about her dress—something almost approaching to an affectation of Quakerism. There was not a single ornament of any kind about her; she wore very long and full lawn sleeves, a tucker which came close up to her chin, and a mob-cap. She made a very low curtsey to the Vicar, another to his son, and then took a seat by her aunt, keeping her eyes fixed upon the carpet. Mrs. Elizabeth took her by the hand as she sat down; and Reginald, who, utterly confused as all his thoughts were, could not avoid retaining possession of some of his senses, heard the aunt whisper in a very low and affectionate tone, "Now, my love, do, pray, be yourself—I know you will—my sweet girl—I know you will exert yourself."

Something or other made him turn his eyes towards his father, and although there was neither a flush on his cheek, nor anything else very much out of the common way, still, somehow or other, the boy could not help thinking the Vicar was ill at ease. But by this time the party were all assembling, and in the midst of that sort of buzz and bustle, he had enough to do to recover something like a command over himself, without having any leisure for speculating much about others.

The young man felt as if a weight had been taken off his breast when the bell rung for dinner, and indeed he would fain have seated himself at a distance from the seniors of the company; but Mrs. Elizabeth called to him, and made him come and occupy a chair which she had reserved for him, beside her own.

Mrs. Betty was always a great talker, and it was lucky for him that such was her disposition; for, in truth, although her frank gaiety, exquisite good nature, and especial kindness, were far from being without their effect on him, his imagination had received such a shock, the whole stream of his thoughts had been so turned from its channel, that he could not for the soul of him command presence of mind enough to have hid his confusion from any less fluent observer.

After the ladies were gone, the old Squire got into prodigious spirits, insisted that Reginald should prove himself a Dalton by the fairness of his filling; and in the course of the evening, indulged the company with a favourite stave of his, which he sung in a voice that must have been a fine one in its day, and with an air that hovered quaintly enough between the jovial and the sentimental.

"Upbraid me not, capricious fair,
With drinking to excess;
I should not wait to drown despair,
Were your indifference less—
Were your indifference less.

"The god of wine, the victory
To beauty yields with joy;
For Bacchus only drinks like me,
When Ariadne's coy—
When Ariadne's coy," &c. &c.

But even the Squire's music could not make his mirth more infectious. In vain did Reginald struggle and strive to enjoy the jokes of "gentle dulness." In fact, there was a gloom which nothing could dissipate; for Fancy had been stript of her blossoms, and, like another Rachel, "Would not be comforted because they were not."

The evening was far advanced ere they joined the ladies in the drawing-room, and Reginald, nothing loth, heard his father whisper that it was time they should move homewards. Both the Squire and Mrs. Betty shook hands with him cordially ere they withdrew; but a faint languid smile, accompanied with rather a chilling inclination of the head, was all that Barbara Dalton bestowed either upon him or his papa.

The Vicar was excessively taciturn during their walk to the Parsonage; and Reginald was not likely to trouble him with many remarks.

Just as they were come in front of the house (it was fine soft moonlight), the Vicar stopped, and looked his son full in the face.

"Reginald," said he, "you must be surprised—you must be very much surprised—I cannot doubt that you are very curious—and hear me, my boy, I am sensible that I ought to satisfy you."

Reginald was quite unprepared for such an address, so he said nothing, but stood with his eyes and lips open.

"My dear boy," said the Vicar, after the pause of a moment, "come up-stairs to my room, and I will speak with you."

He followed his father, and entered the

library, where the servant, having perceived their approach, had already lighted the candles and stirred up the fire. But whatever was the reason, Mr. Dalton had not been a minute in the room ere he said abruptly, and in a tone of some agitation,—"No, Reginald, it won't do here—it won't do just now. Another time will do better—Good-night—good-night." And so the Vicar retired to his bed-chamber.

CHAPTER VII.

WHO WILL BE HEIR?

THE old Squire and Mrs. Elizabeth were both of them early risers; at least, in comparison with the general fashion of their degenerate age. She in her woollen gloves and strong shoes, and he in his green frock and short gaiters, were severally astir by eight o'clock; and they met by accident in the flower-garden, before a single glimpse of day-light had been permitted to enter the chamber of their hosts.

"Good-morrow to you, sister," said the Squire; "have you seen anything of Barbara this morning?"

"No; but I saw her maid," answered Mrs. Betty; "and I take it, upon the whole, she has had a better night than we expected. Poor thing! the meeting must have been a severe shock—I can perfectly enter into her feelings as to *this* matter."

"Lord bless me, Betty," quoth Mr. Dalton "how sentimental you all are? I think that pretty young fellow might have been enough to remind you how many years are gone."

"And to be sure so he did, brother; but what of that? I'm sure cousin John, man though he be, and married though he has been, was just in as great a flurry; ay, greater if the truth were known; at least, he showed it more."

"No, no, Betty—there was an awkwardness you know at first—hang him, that was all his own fault for keeping away from us so long—but you must own that before anybody else joined us he was quite himself. Poor fellow! I can't help being sorry for him. It must have been something very deep that produced such an effect on him. But I wonder what infatuation it was that made him in such a hurry for a wife—If he had only waited——"

"Only waited! which of you is it that will wait?—You're all alike in these matters, brother—so hot, so sudden, so boisterous—and then the moment you meet with the least check, off you go in a pet, forsooth. Nothing but sulks, sulks, sulks! O! you may say what you will, but the men have, in their own style, just as much vanity as we have—and of a far more disagreeable sort, too, I think."

"Do you think it was vanity that made him marry the girl? Everybody said she was uncommonly pretty, I allow that."

"Vanity!—what else could it be?—or pride—you may give it whichever name you like the best. He was one of the lords of the creation, you know, and how should he forgive such an insult from one of us? Would anybody have expected such condescension?—What! be so humble as to ask a second time, with the chance of being refused a second time!"

"Pooh, pooh, Betty—you told me yourself long ago she would have taken him the second time."

"Yes, and I don't deny that I said so—But I told you at the same time, if you please to remember, that we are all of us a great deal too good-natured—'tis our weak point—our foible."

"Ha! ha! Betty; upon my word, it makes me laugh to hear you speak so—*you*, Betty Dalton, *you* that have refused more coaches-and-six in your time than——"

"Nay, nay, Dick—none of your joking."

"There was Sir Benjamin Blount, Betty—what made you refuse *him?* Tell the truth now for once."

"O, the sad rakish man! Why do you mention him, brother?—Poor Sir Benjamin! I believe there was something good about him, after all."

"Good about him? No, that's too tender by half, Betty. Blount was always a Whig."

"A Whig! well, and what then? Lord! when will you men be done with these foolish politics? You're all mad, I think. Do you really suppose that a Whig may not make as good a husband as a Tory, even although he do not drink quite so much?"

"Come, come, Betty, none of your personality, if you please; I'm sure we had not much more than a bottle a-piece. Wait till they give us breakfast—when will that be, I wonder?—and you'll see if I chew high."

"See if you *chew high!* Lord, what an odious phrase that is!"

"Upon my honour, I have not the least touch of the parrot tongue about me."

"The parrot tongue! I'm sure you might teach a parrot to speak more genteelly."

"Pooh, pooh, Betty, I only meant to say that I was not *cut*."

"I can stand your slang no longer, brother. But, seriously, was it not a shame of you to set about teaching that innocent boy? He looked quite flustered when he came into the drawing-room."

"Did he, faith? Well, and I swear I like him the better for that. I must have John to bring the boy to Grypherwast Hall one of these days. Now that the ice is broken, I'm resolved it shan't be my fault if it ever freeze again. I like John himself; he's not a man of my sort, 'tis true—he is a book man, and a quiet one; but there's something about him

that I always did like, and always shall like—ay, and respect too. But the boy!—the boy is a fine plant."

"He's a Dalton all over," quoth Mrs. Elizabeth, with great emphasis; "he's a noble boy, and I feel as if I could love him like a child of my own."

They were both silent for a minute or two, and then the Squire resumed, in a more serious tone—"After all, sister," said he, "it is a great shame that Reginald should have been allowed to grow up to a man almost, without ever even seeing the outside of Grypherwast. Why, it must all be his own one day, Betty."

"Nay, nay, Dick, don't say that, neither; there's many things may happen, you know—there's Barbara; what's to hinder her to——"

"To marry, say ye? No, no, Betty, that won't do now. Poor Barbara! her time is past, and you know as well as I what her mind's in."

"Pooh, brother, you're not going to set it down for a fixed thing that this stuff is to last for ever? She'll soon get sick of it. I wish you could but try her with one single winter at Bath."

"She's too far gone, Betty; it has got into her blood, I fear, and nothing will ever take it out again. O dear! it was a black sight the first time she ever saw one of those fellow's faces; and now that Charles has joined them too, I give her quite up—I am nothing against the two of them."

"Charles Catline is my——I never liked him—boy and man he was always my aversion."

"Come, come, sister, he's Barbara's brother—the only brother she has, more's the pity—but it would be a hard thing to complain of her being attached to him; he was always kind to Barbara."

"Yes," quoth Mrs. Elizabeth, with some emotion; "and I'll tell you what, brother"—here the lady sunk her voice into a whisper. "I'll tell you what is my honest belief, Dick, that when you and I are out of the way, Grypherwast Hall will be very nearly as much Charles Catline's own, as if he had been Barbara's brother by both sides of the house."

The Squire bit his lip, coloured a little, and after a moment's pause, said, very solemnly,—"No, no, Elizabeth, you carry matters too far now. Barbara, come what may, will never forget that her blood is Dalton."

"Blood!" quoth Miss Betty—"I'll be very plain with you, brother; I don't think either blood or name go for much, when once a person gives into these crazy pernicious notions. They'll persuade her among them to do anything they please, and they'll make her believe all the while that 'tis her duty—that's the worst on't."

"That's the worst on't, indeed," echoed the Squire—"confound their infernal cunning—they've ruined my poor child."

Here followed another pause, during which Mrs. Elizabeth kept her eyes very fixedly on her brother. "Richard," at length she said—"Richard, my dear brother, there's a thought that has often come into my head, but even now I can scarce out wi't."

"What is it, Betty?—Speak freely, sister."

"Why, after all, Dick, you're a strong man, very like to see many years yet, if you take decent care of yourself—Would it not be possible for you to pluck up your heart, and——"

"Seek another wife, sister; is that what you mean? O, no, Elizabeth, if you love me, never hint at any such matter again. My dear Margaret——" Here the good old gentleman's voice faltered a little, and his sister was extremely sorry that she should have touched upon that chord. How painful its vibrations still were, she, deceived like others by external appearances, had not imagined. She now strove to change the subject as speedily as possible.

"Reginald," said she, "is certainly a very noble-looking lad. I have been thinking a good deal about him, brother; and I am sure you will quite agree with me, that he has been long enough in this quiet place;—it is high time certainly that he should see a little of the world. Why don't you speak to John about sending him to College? There's the expense, to be sure."

"Pooh! that's nothing, a mere trifle would cover that; and if John would just come over with him, as I was saying, to Grypherwast, Barbara and all of us would be able to get acquainted with him together; and I don't suppose, as matters stand now-a-days, John would be at all above accepting a little help from me, if it be really so that he's too poor to be able to send Reginald to College himself."

"Now, brother," quoth Miss Betty, "nothing can be kinder than all this—'tis just what I should have expected of you—'tis just like yourself. But do take my advice for once—go about it quietly and cautiously. John's a Dalton in his temper, for all his quiet looks—we've had proof enough of that, I think. Do let them come over to Grypherwast, and be with us for a little while before you say anything about these matters. A rash word, however well designed, might do a world of harm, Dick."

"But, sister, what will Barbara say, think ye? Will she like their coming?"

"No," says Mrs. Elizabeth, "I don't think she will—at least not just at the first blush of the business—(you know how she hated the idea of coming to Thorwold even)—but never mind, she'll soon get reconciled."

"Yes, yes," says the Squire, "I'm sure she'll get reconciled—she'll soon, as you say, get quite reconciled, and then all parties will be pleased."

"Hum!" muttered Betty to herself, "I'm not quite sure of that neither."—But whatever

Mrs. Betty's thought was, she did not choose to let her brother hear anything of it; so, for the present, we also shall respect the lady's secret.

CHAPTER VIII.

RETROSPECTIVE.

It was on that same morning, while a gay and merry party were assembled round the breakfast-table at Thorwold Hall, that the Vicar of Lannwell, having gathered from his pillow that resolution which he could not command the evening before, at length told his son the story of which the reader must have collected some notion from the dialogue in the last chapter. I shall not, however, now repeat it as he told it, both because that would occupy more space than I can afford, and because the Vicar (even had he told all he himself knew, which he did not, and indeed could not do) would still have left untold much that the reader of his son's history may be the better for learning. Leaving it to the reader s own sagacity to discover where I am most likely to be going beyond the communication of the father to the son, I shall, without farther preamble, give him some of the information at my disposal, in the shape of a brief and connected sketch.

John Dalton's father was, like his son, a clergyman. He had, rather late in life, been presented to a college living in the west of England, on which he immediately settled; and marrying the daughter of one of the neighbouring gentry, he became so much tied to that part of the country, that he had but slender opportunities of keeping up his intimacy with the members of his own family in the north. He died just about the time when his son John was fit for going to the university, leaving him in possession of a small patrimony, the greater part of which was necessarily expended in the course of a few years' residence at Oxford.

John, having taken his degree with some *éclat*, obtained, through the kindness of a young gentleman educated at the same college with himself, the small benefice of Lannwell, where, as we have seen, he spent the remainder of his life. On arriving in that part of England, he naturally lost no time in repairing to Grypherwast Hall, where Mr. Richard Dalton received him with all the ready hospitality of northern kinsmanship.

John Dalton was at that time a very good-looking young man. Though not possessing brilliant talents, he had, being diligent and temperate, obtained for himself considerable distinction among his contemporaries at the university; and it may fairly be supposed, that when he came down to take possession of his living in Westmoreland, his manners partook of that mixture of conscious dignity and stumbling rawness, which so often marks the demeanour of a young student fresh from the triumphs and the seclusion of a college life.

Under these circumstances, it was perhaps no great wonder that he should have wanted the *tact* to distinguish between the open courtesy of a well-bred cousin, and the attentive shyness of an admiring girl. In short, he fell into the silly blunder of supposing that Barbara Dalton (who *then* really was both young and beautiful) had fallen in love with him at first sight. He pondered over this flattering notion until he had banished every doubt; and at last, one fine summer's day, ere the first three months of his incumbency were expired, he mounted his horse, rode to Grypherwast Hall, met his fair cousin in the gardens, half boldly, half bashfully told his errand, and was forthwith refused in a style which satisfied even himself, that the idea of such a thing had never entered the young lady's head before.

I am almost ashamed to say how absurdly the Vicar behaved himself after this little affair was over. If he had known half as much of real young ladies, as he did of the Phædras, Sapphos, Didos, *et hoc genus*, he would have been aware that very few of them ever think of such matters, until they have been desired to do so. He would have looked very dolefully for a few months, and taken especial care to let Barbara see how dolefully he looked, and returned again in half a year or so, and tried his luck a second time. His was, I believe, the very first offer his young kinswoman had ever received, and who but a booby of a collegian needs to be told, that the most delightful moment in a young woman's life is that, not in which the first declaration is made to her, but in which she begins to reflect within herself that it has been made. In the surprise of the instant she has refused the swain; indeed if one thinks of it for a moment, what can be so unreasonable as to expect that such a modest, blushing creature shall muster brass enough to answer with a "Yes," the first time the most serious of all questions is put to her? A sly experienced hand may no doubt manage matters so that it shall be thus; he may come so often close to the point without ever touching it; he may so completely suggest, and yet so carefully abstain from mentioning; he may plead so effectually, and yet so obscurely, that the poor thing's heart is his ere he has asked it in set terms; that when he does ask it, he is conferring rather than demanding a favour; and that then a voiceless beating of the timid virgin heart is enough to attest on her part the welcome, thrice welcome termination of

> Hopes and fears, a mingled throng,
> And gentle wishes long subdued,
> Subdued and cherish'd long.

But arts like these were of course immeasurably beyond the theoretical, to say nothing

of the practical attainments of John Dalton. He had read Ovid, but he knew no more of love than if he had written the notes to the *De Arte Amandi*. He darted headlong at the ring, and having missed it once, never thought of caracolling it gently round and round the circle, and essaying his dart again with a more leisurely aim, and a steadier hand. His first disappointment effectually satisfied him; and while, perhaps, from the moment of its occurrence, Barbara Dalton neither thought nor strove to think of anything but him, he exerted all the force of his manhood in the struggle, to think no more of her. His unskilful vanity had received a wound far deeper than she, poor girl, had ever dreamt it was possible for herself to have inflicted; and pride was the only physician which he, in his ignorance, had ever thought of calling to his aid.

In short, he became a perfect recluse within the bounds of his little parsonage at Lannwell. There the image of his cousin was associated by him with no ideas but those of pain—perhaps, for there is no limit to such kinds of folly,—even of anger—of wrath. He did all he could, therefore, to banish the image from his fancy; and however much I may shock the fair reader by telling it, the result was, that he ere long was successful in doing so to a very tolerable extent. He fished in the beck, that tumbled into the lake close beside the hedge of his garden; he took long solitary walks among the woods and hills; he eat huge rashers of bacon, drank pots of home-brewed beer, and read Greek at night, with his feet up upon the hobs. Except on Sundays, when he went to church very decently, he became exceedingly careless and ultra-rustical in his attire. There were, as we have seen, no gentlefolks resident very near him, and he would not be at the trouble of visiting those at a distance. Above all, he never once approached the gates of Grypherwast Hall; but, to be sure, the Leven Sands were between him and the seat of his kinsman, so that might be less a matter of wonder.

Barbara Dalton, in the mean time, pined and moped away for many weeks and months, always expecting another visit from her reverend cousin. She had never mentioned what had happened to her father, so he, even more than herself, was at a loss to account for the young man's obstinate absence. At length, news came to Grypherwast, that the Vicar was married.

"Hah, hah!" said the Squire; "and so this is the upshot of the affair! One might have suspected John was in love from his never coming to see us at the Hall. I hope we shall see more of him, however, when once his honey-moon is over."

When the Squire was more accurately informed as to the nature of the connection which his young kinsman had formed, he was far from being pleased with it; and, indeed, it was not strange that this should have been the case.

At the distance of about half a mile from the parsonage of Lannwell, there dwelt in those days, in a snug little cottage by the way-side, a respectable old man, by name Thomas Lethwaite, who, although the land he cultivated was his own property, and had descended to him from a long line of forefathers, was still, in appearance, manners, and habits of life, nothing more than a peasant. This good *statesman* (for so in that district of England your small landed proprietor is styled) was very much distressed about the solitary and melancholy manner in which his young neighbour seemed to be spending his time. He, therefore, did what he could do to comfort the recluse; and, in particular, he would never allow him to pass homewards from his even-tide rambles, without inviting him into his cottage; or, if the weather were fine, to rest and take a cup of mild ale with him beneath the sycamore that shaded his porch.

The statesman was a widower; but he had two pretty daughters that lived with him—Ellen and Lucy. The elder of them might be at this time about sixteen years of age, but she was already the favourite toast on every skittle-green within five miles of Lannwell; and, indeed, she was so tall and well-grown, that but for the almost infantine simplicity of her manners, one might have easily believed her to be two or three years older than she really was; she had the most charming ringlets of light brown hair, and the softest, sweetest blue eyes in all the valley.

This lovely creature was considered at first by the melancholy scholar, as if she had been merely a pretty child—a plaything; and as her own papa thought of and treated her in the same fashion, she expected nothing else. By degrees, however, the heart of the young Vicar (whether or not the recent wounds had increased its tenderness and susceptibility) became sensible to the modest influences of her opening beauty. His evening walks more and more frequently brought him under Lethwaite's old sycamore; nay, he even began to halt there occasionally during the heat of noonday, when the worthy statesman himself was far off among the hills.

In a word, he stood in need of consolation, and he had found where it might be had. He married Ellen Lethwaite towards the close of the season. The statesman gave a grand *fête champêtre* beneath the sycamore, and while all the company were busy dancing and singing, Mr. Dalton led his bride home all alone to his parsonage, beneath the smiles of the brightest harvest-moon that had ever tipt the groves of Lannwell in silver.

[After all, I take it as many marriages are brought about in this way as in any other; at least, among people who knew as little of

the world as Mr. John Dalton and his bride might be supposed to do. When a young gentleman in such a situation has once made up his mind to ask a young woman in marriage, she may refuse him if she will; but the chances are very great, notwithstanding, that he marries either herself or somebody else, ere the year is out.]

Mrs. John Dalton was all that Ellen Lethwaite had seemed—and promised to be—everything that was gentle, tender, affectionate, and good. Her husband, who, although a most amiable man by nature, had originally by no means the smoothest of all possible tempers, felt his happiness to be improved a thousandfold, under the influence of her soothing companionship. Happy as he was with her, and satisfied as she had taught him to be with his lot, there still, however, adhered to him certain feelings (I know not well how they could be described) which prevented him from renewing, in his character of a married man, that intercourse with his relations at Grypherwast Hall, which he had so absurdly broken off as a bachelor. We cannot but take it for granted, that after a little time he must have become in so far sensible to the odd appearance, which his behaviour in this respect could not fail to have in the eyes both of them and of other people. But neither can one be at any loss to understand, that this very consciousness might of itself throw new and ever-increasing difficulties in his way. There is nothing more awkward than the breaking off of an acquaintance, except the renewing of one that has been broken off; and thus from day to day, and from month to month, the thing was deferred, until, I suppose, he had taught himself to consider it as almost an impossibility that he should ever show himself again at the Hall. At first, at the least, the worthy Squire would no doubt attribute his persisting in this strange conduct, to his being ashamed of his humbly-born wife, or to some other cause equally remote from the truth. Of course, Barbara Dalton—and, I believe, her aunt Mrs. Elizabeth too—even from the beginning—suspected much more shrewdly.

But be all these lesser matters as they might, John Dalton and his beautiful wife lived happily together in their secluded abode for nearly two years; at the end of which period Reginald (our acquaintance) was born. Unfortunately the boy did not come easily into the world, and Ellen never recovered the shock this gave her delicate constitution. A sad misfortune befell her sister Lucy just about that time, in the course of an excursion she made to the Preston Guild;—a terrible misfortune, of which, perhaps, more hereafter: And what between bodily weakness and sore mental distresses, so it was, that in the course of a few months Mrs Dalton died, and her wedding-sheet, which, according to the primitive fashion of the district, had been carefully laid by for that purpose, was formed into the shroud which enveloped her remains.*

Thus were the Vicar's best hopes blasted for ever, at the moment when he promised himself a doubling of all his joys. His spirits sunk woefully under the severe infliction; but

> "Cords around his heart were spun,
> That could not, would not be undone."

He was a father, and we have already seen how he roused his energies for the sake of his child—how he devoted the prime of his manhood to rearing him in infancy and in boyhood—how, a few sore subjects only excepted, he, from the dawn almost of reason, condescended to bestow all the confidence of a coeval upon Reginald.

As for Barbara Dalton—from the day she heard of her cousin's marriage, her heart grew cold to everything about her—to man—to life—to the world. Naturally of an ardent temper, the passion which had been too late kindled had soon blazed into a flame—long, long ere that day came, she had mused and nursed herself into the deepest love—it was the first, the last earthly flame destined to disturb her peace.

Hitherto she had hated herself for the rashness and the cruelty (so she looked upon it) of her behaviour to her cousin—she had thought over all he said at that unhappy interview a thousand and a thousand times, and every meditation filled her with the more painful notion of what she herself had said and done. Passion, the great deceiver, convinced her that her conduct *then* had been not only, what it really was, abrupt, and perhaps ungentle—but what it certainly was not—*false*.

* I have no doubt that Denmark is the cradle from which the chief part of the population of that district of England derives its origin; and among many other circumstances strongly corroborative of this belief, I remember a very plain allusion to this identical fashion, in one of the old Danish ballads. A lady, whose husband has married a second wife, and suffered the children of the house to be ill-used by their step-mother, is represented as rising from her grave, and entering the chamber at midnight, for the purpose of reproaching the forgetful husband and negligent father. And among other things she says to him (as nearly as I can recollect and render the words),

> "Thou shrink'st, this pallid shroud to meet,
> Damp from the darksome tomb;
> That shroud was once my wedding-sheet,
> And thou my bold bridegroom."

There are more old songs of the North, in which the same general idea may be found. By the way, in the solemn observance of The White Fast, it is, to this day, the custom of the Hebrews to be arrayed in their shrouds. On that occasion, even the High Priest, at the altar, performs the most lofty service of their ritual in the very vestment which he is one day to wear in his grave. And here, perhaps, may be one more coincidence, in addition to the many that have already been pointed out, between ancient Scandinavia and the unchanging East.

In a word, Barbara had long hated herself, when she reflected on the scene; and yet there were other feelings even more painful, which took possession of her, when she found that she was never to have any opportunity of undoing what she had so rashly done! It was now, indeed, that her anguish became intolerable.

The Vicar's wedding not only at once and for ever put a period to all her hopes and dreams; by degrees, and in course of afterthought, it did more:—It convinced her that she had been a fool for suffering those dreams to sway her mind but for a moment. It filled her with a general contempt for MAN—for his levity, inconstancy, and want of all serious passion. There was something or other that would not allow her to look on John Dalton as worse than other men; on the contrary, she could not, no, not even now, divest herself of her long-cherished belief, that he was superior to others of his sex. Upon that sex at large she poured out the vial which she durst not, desired not, to scatter on his single head. She despised his love—but she satisfied herself that no other could ever bring her love more worthy of her acceptance. Strange, ill-assorted, wandering, perplexing, conflicting thoughts—how deep was the possession which they took of a spirit, strong in nothing but feeling, and there not only strong, but unable to strive against its own strength!

Barbara Dalton, at the age of thirty-seven, was still but imperfectly recovered from the effects of this disappointment, which befell her while she was but in the opening bloom of her youth. By degrees, it is true, her mind had been soothed and healed on the surface. She loved her father and her aunt, and she was extremely attached to her brother uterine (of whom something has been already said), and his family. Of late, indeed, she had been more than ever under Sir Charles Catline's influence, in consequence of his being almost the only one of her relations that did not discountenance some notions which she had embraced very passionately in regard to a certain very important subject. Of all which, more in the sequel.

CHAPTER IX.

A VISIT IN PROSPECT.

THE reader would probably be not much edified by any very particular account of the little incidents that occurred during the three days spent at Thorwold Hall, by the family of Grypherwast. There were walks in the woods, rides on the hill, and boating-parties on the lake; but in the greater part of these Barbara Dalton took no share, and even when she did accompany the rest, silent and reserved, just as she had been the first evening Reginald saw her, she exhibited no symptoms of partaking in the pleasure diffused among those with whom she was surrounded. In vain did the old Squire talk, joke, and laugh; in vain did Mrs. Betty use more quiet endeavours to engage her attention; in vain did Mr. and Mrs. Chisney do everything that kindness and hospitality could suggest—there was still something so painful to her feelings in being placed (as she almost continually was) within the sight of John Dalton, and the sound of his voice, that she was quite unable to resist the constraining and depressing influence. The Vicar, on his part, exerted himself, whatever his private feelings might have been, with increasing success; and as for Reginald, the happy buoyancy of youth asserted its privilege; in spite of all that had happened, before his relations took their departure, he had not only quite recovered the tranquillity of his external demeanour, but, through dint of serious reflection, aided by the high stimulus of juvenile spirits, reconciled his mind, in a great measure, to the actual state of affairs—and almost taught himself to think with less of regret, than of shame, upon the delusions in which his idleness had so long indulged itself.

His intercourse with Frederick Chisney had first animated, if not infused into him, the desire of mingling in the world; and now this desire became more and more strengthened, not only by what he heard every hour in the common course of conversation, but in consequence of the more serious reflections, which he could not help making for himself, in regard to the business of life, and the state of his own future prospects in the world. His father, too, from the moment the Grypherwast family went away, began, he could not but remark, to talk freely with him on subjects which heretofore had been, perhaps, far too much avoided—the necessity, namely, of his choosing a profession, and ere long devoting the whole of his energies to the active duties of life.

No topics could, in one point of view, be more agreeable than these to Reginald—because the very broaching of them implied that his father was sensible he had spent enough of time already in the seclusion of Lannwell; but the youth was perplexed, when he heard the Vicar speak so strongly about the necessity of his looking forward to a life of steady and laborious exertion; and although he did not venture to say out distinctly what was passing through his mind, Mr. Dalton could not recur again and again to that subject (which he did, and with ever-increasing earnestness too), without at length forming some suspicions; and no sooner were these formed, than he resolved to do what duty and affection alike dictated and prescribed.

It was on a Sunday evening, when they were sitting together in the library, that the Vicar first said the long-expected words, "Reginald, you must spend the winter at Oxford. It is a sore thing for me to lose you,

but the time is come. Perhaps we should have been thinking of it sooner."

Much as Reginald had thought of—much as he had even desired what was now proposed, there was a melancholy tenderness in his father's tone of voice that went quite to his heart, and he almost wished the words had not been uttered. However, he gathered his thoughts for a moment, and answered, "My dear father, how is it possible for me to think of being weeks, months, a whole winter, away from you! and yet what can I say? I am nearly eighteen years old."

"Yes, indeed, my dear boy; and as I have already often said to you, and, indeed, as I have no doubt you have often enough reflected with yourself, the world is before you, for you to make your own way in it. It is high time you were preparing to look on yourself as a man."

"Will you go with me to Oxford?" said Reginald.

"I don't know," said the Vicar. "It is so long since I left the place, that I dare say I should be as much a stranger in it as yourself. I have one old friend there, who, I am sure, will do all he can to have you comfortably established. Besides, you know, my dear, the journey would be a very considerable expense, and you are aware, that I shall now have less money to spare than I have ever had."

Reginald heard these last words with a new feeling of pain; for, in truth, money was a thing he had scarcely ever thought of. But ere he could say anything, his father went on, "I am sure of one thing, that my dear boy will be careful of the little I can afford to give him. Oxford was, and always must be, a place of great temptation, in more ways than one, Reginald. I trust you will remember, when you are far away from Lannwell, the lessons of moderation you have learned here. I hope you will forget nothing that you ought to remember."

"My dear father," said he, "you may depend upon it, I will never spend a single sixpence I can help."

The Vicar smiled a little, and there was silence for a minute or two on both sides. He then resumed in a less serious tone, and said, "I shall go as far as Grypherwast Hall with you, however—'tis all in your way; and you know I promised Mr. Dalton, that we should both of us pay him a visit ere long."

Reginald's face involuntarily coloured up when he heard this; he paused, however, for a moment ere he said in answer, "How happy I shall be to see the old Hall, father! and the Squire was so very kind, and so was Mrs. Elizabeth."

"Ay, Reginald," said the Vicar, "they are kind, very kind people, and nothing can be more proper than that you should be sensible of their kindness; but forgive me, my dear boy, if I am wronging you,—do you know, I cannot help suspecting that, in spite of all the hints I have dropt from time to time, you indulge yourself in some very foolish expectations from that quarter?"

The thing was so true, and the mention of it so unexpected, that Reginald's face at once betrayed him. He blushed deeply, and looked any way but towards his father. He, on his part, rose from his seat, and traversed the room several times with slow, heavy steps, ere he proceeded any farther.

"Reginald," said he, resuming his chair, "since we have come fairly upon this subject, let us make an end of it once and for all. I tell you the truth, so help me God, and nothing but the truth, when I say to you, that I believe the possessions of our ancestors will never be either mine or yours."

"But why, my dear father," said Reginald, taking courage—"why do you speak so positively? The Squire is very old, and Miss Dalton, you know, is not young—for a woman I mean."

"Hear me, boy, and I will tell you exactly how the matter stands, so far as I have been able to understand it myself—and I believe I have had opportunities rather better than yours for doing so. Mr. Dalton's estate goes of course to his daughter. If he would he could not alter that—but he is devotedly attached to his child. She is his only child, and she must be as dear to him, as you, Reginald, are to me—how can one doubt that she is most dear to him?"

"Surely, surely," said Reginald; "but if she never marries?——"

"There is nothing to hinder her marrying," said the Vicar, blushing a little, and looking downwards in his turn—"There is nothing in her age to prevent it, and between ourselves, Reginald, she has got into the hands of a set of people, among whom she might be very likely to find a husband, but that there is one among them who would rather she should never have one at all—I mean her brother—I mean Sir Charles Catline."

"But, dear father, Sir Charles Catline is not a Dalton, though he is her brother."

"True, my boy; but although he is not a Dalton, he may like very well to be the heir of the Daltons."

"I can never believe Miss Dalton would have the baseness——"

"Come, come, Reginald, you talk like a boy indeed now. Sir Charles Catline is her brother; and knowing all that you do know, do you seriously think it likely she should hesitate between *him* and *me?*"

"Hesitate between justice and injustice, you mean to say," answered Reginald.

"Call it as you will," quoth the Vicar, "such is the case. But you shall go with me to Grypherwast, and see with your own eyes, if you will not put trust in what I say to you—you shall witness the bondage, the vassalage, into which artful, I fear, very artful, very designing people have brought her—above

all, you shall see this Catline. For me, I know him of old."

"And what sort of a man is he, father? But why should I ask? If he would take Grypherwast, were it in his power, he must be a villain indeed."

The Vicar smiled again. "My dear boy," said he, "you have many things to learn yet. But I will confess one thing to you, and that is, that of all the changes I have ever heard of, Sir Charles Catline's must be the strangest, if he be at heart what they now say he appears to be.—*Alas, my poor Lucy!*"—These last words were uttered in a broken whisper, and the Vicar paused.—"And yet, Reginald," he proceeded after a moment, "God forbid that we should judge uncharitably. There is nothing impossible to the Almighty.—But in the mean time I repeat to you once more, that you are to dismiss from your mind these vain, silly dreams. Dismiss them instantly, my boy, and be thankful to God, that if you make a proper use of the faculties he has given you, no part of your worldly happiness need be dependent on the caprice of strangers. —Hear me, Reginald! if you are too wise in your own conceit to follow my advice, if you persist in this folly, this absurdity, this madness (for I can give it no other name), you will undo yourself—and me too, my dear boy, for what have I in the world but you?"

Reginald was exceedingly affected with the passionate manner in which his father delivered himself. A tear had gathered in his eye ere he answered (and he did it in a tone at once trembling and energetic), "My dearest father, what have I but you—whom else have I to listen to, to obey, to love? I confess to you, that I have been silly enough to regard all these matters in a different light; but henceforth I shall have no thoughts of my own. In this, and in all things, be sure that I shall endeavour to do according to your desire. Would to God I could be such as you would have me!"

"My dearest boy, my only hope," said the Vicar, "you *are*, you are already all that I would have you. I have told you my own weaknesses, because I would rather you should know them, and be strong yourself, than be weak in ignorance of them. Go into the world, my Reginald, and happy will my grey hairs be, if you prove in manhood such a creature as I love in you now."

CHAPTER X.

THE GREEN SEAL.

In spite of all the excitements of curiosity, all the bustle of undefined expectation, the fortnight during which Reginald looked forward to and prepared for his departure from Lannwell, was a period, on the whole, of painful, far—far more than of pleasureable emotion. His father's whole air and aspect seemed to be suffused, as the day approached nearer and nearer, with the tones of an ever-softening interest, and a more melancholy seriousness of affection. The stillness of the autumnal air, meanwhile, began to be broken by sudden blasts of wind, that whistled and moaned among the branches; and every morning showed some favourite tree stript of half the foliage that had mantled it overnight in all the fragile gracefulness of October. The turfen walks of the garden lay encumbered with dead and rustling leaves. Nature, indeed, was still beautiful, but it was the beauty of decay, and its influences accorded well with the gloom of pensive tenderness which hung and deepened over the spirits both of the man and of the boy.

At length the day came, and Reginald, although his father was going along with him, did not leave the vicarage without some sorrowful enough farewells. Frederick Chisney, however, joined them with a cheerful face at the gates of Thorwold; and the presence of a third person, even less merry than he was, would have been enough to divert, in some measure, the current of their thoughts. Besides, after they had advanced a few miles on the way, every-thing was new to Reginald, and even the dreary novelty of the Leven Sands was able to occupy and interest his mind. The good Vicar and Frederick, both of them, smiled, though not at all in the same sort, at some juvenile raptures he could not help feeling now and then, and dreamt not of suppressing;—for every paltry collier sloop was a ship, and Morecamb Bay was ocean itself to one, that had never before seen any thing greater than a little inland mere.

They halted to bait their horses at a little village on the main coast of the Palatinate, and then pursued their course leisurely through a rich and level country, until the groves of Grypherwast received them amidst all the breathless splendour of a noble sunset. It would be difficult to express the emotions with which young Reginald regarded, for the first time, the ancient demesne of his race. The scene was one which a stranger, of years and experience very superior to his, might have been pardoned for contemplating with some enthusiasm; but to him the first glimpse of the venerable front, embosomed amidst its

"Old contemporary trees,"

was the more than realisation of cherished dreams. Involuntarily he drew in his rein;—and, the whole party as involuntarily following the motion, they approached the gateway together at the slowest pace.

The gateway is almost in the heart of the village, for the Hall of Grypherwast had been reared long before English gentlemen conceived it to be a point of dignity to have no humble roofs near their own. A beautiful stream runs hard by, and the hamlet is almost

within the arms of the princely forest, whose ancient oaks, and beeches, and gigantic pine-trees, darken and ennoble the aspect of the whole surrounding region. The peasantry, who watch the flocks and herds in those deep and grassy glades, the fishermen, who draw their subsistence from the clear waters of the river, and the woodmen, whose axes resound all day long among the inexhaustible thickets, are the sole inhabitants of the simple place. Over their cottages the Hall of Grypherwast has predominated for many long centuries, a true old Northern manor-house, not devoid of a certain magnificence in its general aspect, though making slender pretensions to anything like elegance in its details. The central tower, square, massy, rude, and almost destitute of windows, recalls the knightly and troubled period of the old Border wars; while the overshadowing roofs, carved balconies, and multifarious chimneys, scattered over the rest of the building, attest the successive influence of many more or less tasteful generations. Excepting in the original baronial tower, the upper parts of the house are all formed of oak, but this with such an air of strength and solidity, as might well shame many modern structures raised of better materials. Nothing could be more perfectly in harmony with the whole character of the place, than the autumnal brownness of the stately trees around. The same descending rays were tinging with rich lustre the outlines of their bare trunks, and the projecting edges of the old-fashioned bay-windows which they sheltered; and some rooks of very old family were cawing over-head almost in the midst of the hospitable smoke-wreaths.

Within a couple of yards from the door of the house, an eminently respectable-looking old man, in a powdered wig, and very rich livery of blue and scarlet, was sitting on a garden-chair, with a pipe in his mouth, and a cool tankard within his reach upon the ground.

This personage rose, and, laying down his tube, uncovered himself, and performed as elaborate a bow to the name of Dalton, as Dr. Samuel Johnson himself ever did to the dignity of an archbishop. He told them, with an air of concern, that his master was confined to his room by a touch of gout; "but my young mistress," quoth he, "and Mrs. Elizabeth, are sitting with him, and if you'll just wait for a moment, I'll let them know who are come."

So saying, the old man tottered on as fast as he could before them, and, after ushering them into a large dark-panelled parlour, repeated his best obeisance, and left them for a little to themselves. But he might have staid a long while ere Reginald at least had wearied, for the walls of the room were quite covered with old portraits, and the youth was in a moment too busy with these to think of anything besides. He had not, however, had time to examine more than two or three of the embrowned and whiskered visages, ere the man returned with a face full of smiles, to say that his master was delighted to hear of their arrival, and requested them to come into his dressing-room. "The family have dined an hour ago," added their guide, "but we'll soon get something for you, and you'll dine beside the Squire, if you have no objections."

"Anywhere you please," quoth Frederick Chisney; "but do make haste, old boy, for we're as sharp as hawks."

"God bless you, sir," said Thomas Bishop; "I wish you had come a little earlier, for we had one of the grandest haunches to-day that ever mortal eye beheld; but never fear, gentlemen, we'll toss up a hash in five minutes time, and a beef steak, maybe—perhaps your honours would like to have a beef steak along with the hash?"

"Thou hast said it," quoth Chisney; "and now lead the way, my hearty."

The Vicar and his son followed, smiling in spite of themselves, and after passing through three or four spacious chambers, in one of which was a bed, and in another a billiard-table, they reached the snug little *habitaculum* where the Squire was established in the "*otium cum dignitate*" of his customary disorder. As the door was being opened, they could hear him saying, in rather a surly whisper,—"Away with all your confounded trumpery—shuffle your tracts and hymn-books out of sight, I say:" and, to be sure, there was almost as formidable an array of pamphlets on the table, as there was of phials on the chimney-piece.

The Squire made an effort, and rose from the abyss of his enormous elbow-chair, to welcome them. Mrs. Elizabeth laid down her knitting with a most cordial smile; and even Barbara, now that she was under her own roof, and had guests to receive, acquitted herself with an air of frankness totally unlike anything that Reginald had seen her exhibit while at Thorwold.

"My brother has just left us," said she,—"'tis so unfortunate—but he's to be with us again to-morrow; and in the mean time——"

"They'll eat their dinner, to be sure," interrupted the Squire; "and if there was but one bottle of wine in my cellar, they should have it. Betty—Betty, my dear, you know best about such things—just desire the Bishop to fetch some of the old green seal."

Mrs. Betty whispered Thomas, who had just re-entered the room, and who signified, by a knowing smile, that his foot needed no guide to the binn in question. In the mean time, a table was covered at the opposite side of the chamber, and in the course of a very few minutes the three travellers were paying their best respects to the *hachi*.

A very ingenious author has recently written a very delightful Essay on the 'Pleasures of

Sickness,'—but he has omitted one charming moment,—I mean that when the convalescent man receives in his chamber the first visit of a friend whose face has never approached him during the severity of his illness. The Squire of Grypherwast was now in full enjoyment of this. The associations of the sick-room were just vanishing beneath the influence of new looks and new voices, and ere the strangers had made an end of their repast, he had already got the length of declaring he felt himself so much better, he thought he might venture on a glass of claret.

In vain did Mrs. Elizabeth shake her head :—in vain did Miss Barbara lift her hands and her eyes : in vain did even the old Bottle-holder whisper caution as he set a glass of the smallest size before him. The Squire's glee was up — the little round table was wheeled towards the fireside, and the first smack of "the green seal," bathed his lips in Elysium.

With what slow deliberate satisfied *gusto* did he imbibe the "molten ruby!" No gulping, as if it had been water, and merely intended for the destruction of thirst ;—no ;—drop descended after drop, calmly, leisurely : every individual liquid atom came in contact with the palate over which it glided ;—no waste of that precious dew : Had it been nectar and poured by Hebe, it could not have been drained more devoutly. — The ancient butler stood in the door-way with his mild eyes fixed on his master, while the draught descended. The Squire's eye met his just as it was over.—With a sort of half-apologetic, half-quizzical nod, he filled the glass again to the brim, beckoned to the time-honoured serving-man, and, handing the bumper to him over his left shoulder, whispered, "Take away this dwarf's cup, my Lord Bishop ; I suppose you thought we were going to be at the dram-bottle."—He concluded this brief but intelligible address, with humming waggishly enough the old tune of

> "Busy, curious, thirsty fly,
> Drink with me, and drink as I."

Thomas reverently bowed,—cast a self-reproaching glance on the diminutive glass, tossed the contents over his tongue with a single jerk, and then, with all the solemn gravity of a Zeno, replaced the rejected vessel by one, whose tall, solid, transparent, flower-woven stalk, towered some six inches above the board.

In short, it was plain the night was to be a jolly one. The ladies retired with sour looks, when the tone in which the second magnum was called for had sufficiently indicated that a third might chance to follow—and the gentlemen saw no more of them until next morning. There was a great deal of talk about Reginald's approaching entrance to the University ; and the Squire, who also had worn the square cap in his day, although, perhaps, it had never sat quite so familiarly about his ears as the hunting one, was not loath to have the opportunity of calling up fifty long-forgotten stories about proctors *bit*, and *bull-dogs* baffled. Chisney, surveying with his quick and wicked glances the portly and rotund old rural invalid, could not help smiling to hear him representing himself in the light of a gay young spark, swaggering along Magdalen meadow in a flowing silk gown, and flirting with damsels that had long ago slept under Carfax. Every now and then, however, the good Squire was careful to interweave some parenthesis of prudential warning—"Ah, you laugh, you young dogs, ' he would say, "you laugh to hear me telling of all these foolish pranks ; but let them laugh that win, my lads ; what does the old Archdeacon's rhyme say, Mr. Chisney ? you must have seen it ere now in the window of Merton Church.—Ah ! hang it, I'm rusted sorely now-a-days ! how does it run, man ?

> '——Post nisum, usum—visum,——'

Nay, confound it, I thought I could have remembered that too.—Hang it, hang it, you dog, you're new off the irons, how goes it ?"

Frederick muttered a little to himself, and then spouted without hesitation the old leoline lines,

> "Post visum, risum ; post risum, venit in usum ;
> Post usum, tactum ; post tactum venit in actum :
> Post actum factum ; post factum pœnitet actum.',

"Yes, yes," quoth the Squire ; "that's the very thing—how should I have forgot it—

> 'Post pactum, factum ; post actum pœnitet factum ;'

but 'tis all as good and true in English as in Latin, after all. O you young devils, beware of wine and wantonness—beware of wine and wantonness, I say—but John, John, cousin John, your glass is empty, man."

So saying, another bumper passed round the board, and the Squire leaping in a moment from his moralities, began to chaunt in his most sonorous tone,

> "Old Chiron thus preached to his pupil Achilles,
> 'I'll tell you, young gentleman, what the fates' will is :
> You, my boy,
> Must go
> (The Gods will have it so)
> To the siege of Troy :
> Thence never to return to Greece again,
> But before those walls to be slain.
> Ne'er let your noble courage be cast down,
> But all the while you lie before the town,
> Drink, and drive care away : drink and be merry :
> For you'll go ne'er the sooner to the Stygian ferry.' "

The Vicar heard him with a benignant smile, saying, he was sure Reginald would follow the good advice the Squire had given

him, in spite of the seductive *moral* of his glee.

"Ay, ay," quoth the old man, "I'm sure he will, I'm sure he will. Be a good lad, Reginald, and mind your book, do ye hear; and if you take the honours, do ye hear me, and I live to see the day, why, we'll kill the prettiest buck, and see if there be no more of the green seal. But you'll be corrupted by that time—ah, yes, in spite of all your demure looks, you'll be well broken ere that time—you'll be fit to lay an old boy like me under the table ere then, you dog.—Do they give you good black strap at Oxford in these days, Mr. Frederick?"

Frederick hereupon began to talk of vintages and so forth, with an air of understanding that was far from being over and above pleasing to the Vicar, whose son was just about to commence his academical career under these auspices. The party broke up soon afterwards, chiefly, it may be supposed, in consequence of his reiterated hints and expostulations; and Reginald, whose chamber communicated with that of his father, was not suffered to go to bed until he had heard a very serious lecture.

This youth, when his father had left him, found himself the tenant of a very stately and lofty room, all panelled in black oak, with two or three quaint hunting-pieces, hung here and there in huge carved frames of the same material. The tall crimson bed was in keeping with the style of the apartment, and might probably have stood there ever since it was built. High-backed chairs, with down cushions, that sunk half a yard when one pressed them, were ranged in great order all around, and a curious little circular dressing-closet was supplied, at one of the corners, by a turret. The boy was, on the whole, happy with the occurrences of the day, and he did not find himself alone for the first time under that roof without feelings of pride and gratification; but at the same time he had left *home*—and he was about to part with his father—and in the quiet of the hour he could not think, without something of timidity and heaviness, of being so near the brink of total novelty. However, care is but an unnatural visitant for a bosom so young—and we may add, so innocent as his; and Reginald ere long fell asleep.

A thousand antique forms flitted before him in his dreams, and when he woke, which he did early, and looked out from his pillow upon the grand old chamber, and the big oak that stretched its arms across the window, he still continued to dream: Alas! he said to himself, how many Daltons have lain here before me! The same blood that now flows in my veins, has it not danced long ago here in light hearts, that are all crumbled into dust? Have not eyes of the same shape and fashion as these of mine gazed on these very objects? Have not ancestors of mine been born in this very bed—have they not died in it too?—No one ever found himself for the first time within the dwelling of a long line of his fore-fathers, without being greeted by some such imaginings;—they came to Reginald's bosom strongly, intensely, sorrowfully—so much so, that I fancy he could almost have found it in him to weep, at the moment when a rosy-cheeked young lad came in to take his clothes, and bade him good morning with a hearty rustic chuckle,—a scaring-bell to sentiment.

CHAPTER XI.

POOR BARBARA.

THE Squire did not of course appear at the breakfast-table; but Barbara and Betty did its honours in a most hospitable style. The elder lady scolded the Vicar a little for having given his countenance to something not unlike a debauch; but altogether much good humour prevailed. A walk in the park was proposed, and Mrs. Elizabeth soon appeared accoutred for exercise; but Barbara said she was sorry she could not be of the party, and whispered something into her aunt's ear about *children* and a *school*.

Young Chisney, having discovered that an intimate acquaintance of his was in the same neighbourhood, begged one of the Squire's horses, and set off to pay his visit; while Mr. Dalton and his son began their inspection of the grounds, under the superintendence of their worthy relation.

She took them a long walk; first through all the gardens, and then by the side of the river, and up the hill too, among fine open old groves, where herds of beautiful deer were browsing. She could not move very quickly, but she was indefatigable, and as she walked between her cousins, leaning on their arms, her conversation flowed on at once so gaily and so sensibly, that neither of them had any inclination to complain of the rate at which they were proceeding. At last she brought them to the edge of a small but deep hollow, very thickly wooded with ancient trees, and, pausing for a moment, said to the Vicar, "Do you know whither I am carrying ye now, cousin? You surely do."

"Yes," said Mr. Dalton, "I know it well, ma'am; but why should you take the trouble of going down there? I can show it to Reginald another time."

"Nay, nay," said the old lady, smiling very sweetly, and yet rather solemnly too, "if that's all the matter you need not stop me here. There's seldom a week passes but I pay my visit in this quarter; and we'll e'en go down together, if you please, for we three may seek all the world over, I take it, without finding another spot where we have so much in common."

So speaking, she resumed her hold of the Vicar's arm, and leaning on it with rather a stronger pressure than before, proceeded down the path, which was too narrow for three to walk a-breast on it. Reginald, following the pair, soon found himself almost in darkness, for the trees there were chiefly pines, and their strong and lofty red shafts stood close together, so that there was a complete canopy, black rather than green, overhead. Neither his father nor Mrs. Dalton was saying anything, and somehow or other he did not like to ask any questions, but there was a sort of elaborate gloom in the place, so different from the aspect of any other part of the grounds he had been traversing, that he could not help divining something of what the old lady had alluded to.

Deep down in the dell there is a space left open among the trees :—smooth firm old turf, and a little rivulet flowing clear as crystal over a bed of the whitest pebbles. It was here that in ancient times rose the nunnery of St. Judith's—the same religious house, to some of the possessions of which the Dalton family succeeded in the reign of Henry VIII. —a splendid and lofty structure in its day. Of all that once wide and magnificent pile, there remains nothing now but one or two prostrate columns, a fragment of the cloister, and a single very small chapel, quite open on one side to the air, and mantled all over with ivy. This was originally one of a great number of subordinate chapels, branching off from the nave of the conventual church ; but the Daltons, long before they became lords of the ground, had chosen to make it their burying-place ; and hence probably its preservation in the midst of so much destruction or decay.

Mrs. Elizabeth opened the wicket, and, without saying anything, led the way into the enclosure. When they were all beneath the roof of the chapel, she sat down on the edge of a little altar-tomb, while the gentlemen stood uncovered by her side, their eyes wandering over the maze of old effigies and inscriptions, with which the opposite wall was laden. Reginald stirred neither foot nor hand for some minutes, lost in pensive curiosity ; but at last stepped forward to spell out an epitaph which he had not been able to understand. Even when he had come quite close to it, it was still illegible ; all but the words "Reginald Daltune," and the date MDXXXVIII.

"Ay, ay," said Mrs. Elizabeth, "that Reginald, I believe, was but a very young man when he died. His father was slain at Flodden-field, and left him an orphan, and that's all we know of him. Look at the next stone, cousin, and you will find a plain text, if I be not forgetful."

It was a simple slab of marble fixed low on the wall, with the initials B. D. at the top of it, and underneath these words in gilt capitals, seemingly but recently carved there :—"OUR FATHERS FIND THEIR GRAVES IN OUR SHORT MEMORIES, AND SADLY TELL US HOW WE SHALL BE BURIED IN OUR SURVIVORS. LET ME BE FOUND IN THE REGISTER OF GOD, NOT IN THE RECORD OF MAN."

"Poor Barbara," said Mrs. Elizabeth, after our youth had read the words aloud ;— "poor Barbara! this now is one of her fancies, and yet who can say much against it?"

"Barbara!" said the Vicar, "what has she done, I pray you?"

"Only put up her own monument, cousin;" she replied, "you see it there before you ; but 'tis not a thing of yesterday, as you may observe. I believe the inscription is almost as old as your Reginald."

The Vicar's countenance underwent a change sudden and melancholy, upon his hearing these words, and he walked away by himself to the other extremity of the chapel. Mrs. Elizabeth followed him with a look of deep regret, and then, as if checking her thoughts, she turned to Reginald, and said to him in an energetic and lively tone, "Look round ye, young man, and tell me your mind —Whether, now, would ye lie here, after having been a good and great divine, like the Dean on your left, or after having been a gallant and good soldier, like Sir Marmaduke under your foot? The one died at eighty-five, and the other at eight-and-twenty ; but what matters that now?"

"Wherever I live," said the youth, "I hope I shall be buried here."

"Ay," said Elizabeth very quickly, and yet very seriously, "and I hope you will remember the saying of one of the wisest men that ever lived : 'Happy is he who so lives, that when he dies he makes no commotion among the dead.' Always remember that you are a Dalton, my dear boy, and remember that we shall all have our wakening together here, as well as our sleep.'

The Vicar turned round hastily when he heard this, and said to his son, "Be thankful, my boy, for Mrs. Dalton's good advice, but do not persuade yourself that you are even to have a grave at Grypherwast——" He stopped suddenly, when the words were out, with the air of one that has said more than he intended to say ; but the old lady rose at once from her seat, and taking Reginald by the hand, said in an audible whisper, "Nay, nay, young man, they won't grudge you *that:* but we've been long enough here for this time ; don't let us forget the world while the sun is yet over our heads."

So saying, Mrs. Elizabeth led Reginald out of the chapel, and the Vicar followed them lingeringly through the wood. The path by which they quitted its precincts was a different one from that by which they had ap-

proached them; and much to Reginald's surprise, they were scarce beyond the shadow of the pines, ere the hamlet and the manor-house lay bright in view, not two hundred yards from them in the valley below.

"You see," said Mrs. Elizabeth, "one's last journey here is anything but a long one. I must step into the village, though, before I go home, for Barbara sometimes forgets the hours when she's busy with her affairs. Will you walk with me, and see her in her school-room?"

"Perhaps," said the Vicar, "we might be intruding on Miss Dalton."

"Nay, nay," said the old lady, "you need not stand upon that ceremony. Barbara will be pleased with your coming; I know she will. The school is the very pride of her heart, poor thing."

The situation of this school was certainly a very beautiful one. The cottage itself was long and low, neatly white-washed, with creepers about the windows, a wide porch in the centre, and at either end one of those tall round chimneys which give such a picturesque effect to the hamlets of northern Lancashire, and some of the neighbouring counties. Placed within a little garden-green, and shaded from behind by a gigantic elm-tree, it seemed the very picture of humble repose, and the subdued hum of young voices which reached the ear in approaching, did not disturb that impression. The Vicar paused when they had reached the door, as if to let Mrs. Elizabeth go in and tell they were there; but she, once more nodding encouragement, lifted the latch, and they found themselves in a moment beyond the threshold. — A cheerful low-roofed room was filled with little girls; some sewing, others reading;— and Miss Dalton was sitting in the midst at work, on what seemed to be a flannel petticoat, while two gentlemen, and a very young lady in a riding-habit, appeared to be occupied in catechising some of the children.

Miss Dalton did not look in the least ashamed of being caught in her good works, but rose to receive them with a smile of courteous surprise. After bidding them severally welcome, she turned round and said to the elder of the two gentlemen behind her, "Charles, my dear, what has become of your eyes? I am sure you have seen my cousin Mr. John Dalton before."

Sir Charles Catline, upon being thus admonished, stepped a pace or two forward; but the Vicar of Lannwell remained where he was, and the profound bow he made was so very grave and ceremonious, that the Baronet halted, and replied to it by one equally distant, although performed in a manner somewhat less deliberate. Miss Barbara, without apparently observing this, introduced the other gentleman as Mr. Collins, the curate of a neighbouring parish, and the young lady as Miss Catline, and then, resuming her seat and her work, said, "Don't stop, Charles, my dear; let Lucy have out her lesson, you know, and then we'll all go together to the Hall."

"*Lucy!*" said the Vicar in a whisper, and bit his lip and looked downwards.

Sir Charles glanced keenly at him from under his eyelids, and then, stooping quickly, took up the book which he had dropt on the floor, and began again to put questions to the child; but he did this in such a stammering and hesitating style, that Miss Dalton said, "Nay, Charles, you're quite put out, man; Lucy can't understand you, if you deliver yourself thus; but you can't play the teacher before strangers, I suppose."

He closed the book instantly, as if pleased to have done with the affair, and once more the cold and steady eye of the Vicar met his. He returned the gaze for a moment, and a deep flush passed athwart his countenance while he did so; but that also was over immediately, and he resumed, though not apparently without an effort, the usual serenity of his aspect and demeanour. The Vicar seemed to make an effort too, but his was not quite so successful. Indeed, from the moment he entered the school-room, a cloud was visible on his brow, throughout almost the whole of the day. There was an unusual absence in his manner, which even young Reginald could not help remarking, though he was far enough from guessing the true cause of its appearance.

Reginald had been, as we have seen, somewhat prepared to dislike Sir Charles Catline long ere now; yet when the boy saw him, he was obliged to confess to himself that he was a very good-looking man. He was now some years turned of forty, and his forehead was rather bald, but his complexion was still fresh and rosy, and his cheeks as smooth as possible. Any unprejudiced stranger would certainly have pronounced the Baronet to be a person of singularly mild and amiable aspect, and though his dress was rather shabby, and by no means fashionable in the cut, and arranged, moreover, in an extremely demure and precise way, still there was no effectual concealment of an air and *tournure*, which could only have been derived from the *beau-monde*. Mr. Collins, who accompanied Sir Charles, was a young man of mild and soft manners also, and he, too, had rather a handsome face; but there was a stiffness about him which betrayed the mere curate, except, perhaps, to the eyes of Barbara Dalton, and her pretty little niece and god-daughter, both of whom, indeed, seemed to treat the young divine with a more than ordinary measure of respect and attention. For, after all (*soit dit en passant*), there are certain little clerical privileges and advantages which it is quite possible to enjoy in tolerable perfection, even in countries where cowls and tonsures have had the fortune to be exploded.

There was a considerable party that day at dinner, for, in addition to the persons to whom we have already been introduced, Lady Catline, and another of her daughters, were there. Reginald found himself placed, as usual, beside Mrs. Elizabeth ; and the old lady had chosen her chair at the Squire's end of the table, while Sir Charles and Mr. Collins were near Miss Dalton at the head of it.

The Squire himself was rather out of humour ; for though it was the first day he had dined out of his own room for more than a week, he was still far from feeling quite well, and the number of his party gave him some annoyance. Besides, he was, or thought himself, obliged to keep up conversation with Lady Catline, who sat by him ; and, to say truth, although her ladyship was, like himself, fond of talking, the Squire and she were two persons that had by no means the same taste as to topics. She bothered him with prosing about new novels of which he had never heard ; and when he, in his politeness, made any attempt to introduce Roderick Random, or Peregrine Pickle, she professed total ignorance of any such naughty books. She minced some liberal sentiments, and he was the very bear of Tories. She even dared to insinuate a sneer or two about High-Church ; and if she had trampled with the whole weight of her heel upon the Squire's cloth shoe, she could scarcely have offended in a quarter more painfully sensitive. To sum up the whole of her demerits, she was a Blue-stocking—and a Whig,—and nobody could tell who was her grandfather ; and she was a blowsy-faced little woman—and she eat lustily of half-a-dozen different dishes—and her hair was reddish—and her hands and ears were big——and the Squire had never liked her. Perhaps Methodism was the only thing he thoroughly despised that could not be laid to her charge ; and perhaps, considering the style of his opinions as to the relative duties of the female sex, Sir Charles Catline's wife was rather more disagreeable to him for presuming to keep free of that particular blemish, than she could have been for wearing it between her eyes. The Vicar, who supported this lady on the other side, appeared to be not much more taken with her than his kinsman.

Throughout the whole of the evening, Reginald could not help making observation, that his father and Sir Charles Catline never, by any accident, exchanged words ; but when the gentlemen rejoined the ladies in the drawing-room, which was a very long and spacious apartment, three distinct parties were formed, and these seemed to have about as little to do with each other, as if they had been ten miles asunder. The Squire sat in his arm-chair by the fire-side, with Reginald, the Vicar, and Mrs. Betty close to him. The Baronet, Miss Dalton, Barbara Catline, and the Curate, kept possession of the table on which tea had been served ; while Frederick Chisney found his amusement between Lady Catline and her second daughter Julia, quizzing the one, flirting a little with the other, and now and then suffering himself to be beat at *trou-madame*. The last was certainly the gayest set of the three ; perhaps the only one amongst all the members of which the announcement of Sir Charles's carriage was an unwelcome occurrence.

The moment they were gone, the Squire ordered supper ; and when he found that the two young men must really set off on their journey southward in the morning, and the Vicar also for Westmoreland, a huge jorum of mulled port was called in to alleviate the affliction of the parting. But even after a second edition of the tankard, the kind old gentleman could not go to his bed until he had made them all promise to come and take farewell of him ere they started.

CHAPTER XII.

AN OLD HISTORY.

As the Vicar and Reginald were walking down the long gallery towards their bed-chambers, and talking together as they went, Mrs. Elizabeth, who had retired from the party below stairs some considerable time earlier, made her appearance in her night-cap and a wide dimity dressing gown, at the door of an apartment, in which a brilliant fire was blazing. The Vicar was halting his pace, for he was naturally unwilling to contaminate, even by a passing glance, the vestal penetralia of the old spinster ; but she stood firm to her post, and beckoning them onwards with her finger, said, with a slight mixture of mystery, and of roguery too, in the tone of her whisper, —" Your black cloth will take no spot, cousin John, although you should venture yourself for a moment—Come—come hither—I have something I would fain speak to you about, —but don't keep Reginald from his bed.—Good-night, my dear Reginald."

The Vicar, with a smile and a blush, followed his venerable Armida into her bower ; and the door was instantly closed upon our youth, who, it must be confessed, was not without some feeling of curiosity as to the scope and tendency of this furtive interview. He was fain, however, to creep into his bed, since there was nothing better in his power.

There were two most comfortable easy-chairs in Miss Betty's dressing-room, and as soon as she and her reverend visitor were established in these, at the opposite sides of the fire, the old lady coughed once or twice, and then spoke as follows, though not without something both of hesitation and confusion in her manner :—

" I am going to take a great freedom, Mr.

Dalton—but I hope you will just consider me as a sort of old aunt, and let me have my own way.'

The Vicar bowed respectfully, and met the old lady's kind look with an eye from which gratitude all but ran over.

"Well," she proceeded—"this now is just as it should be among friends and kindred—But why should I make any more speeches?—Your living is not a great one, John Dalton, and this pretty boy of yours will cost you money, now he's agoing to Oxford—Will you treat me like a friend indeed, and not hurt me by refusing to accept of this small mark of my good-will—my affection for you both?"

With this Miss Betty lifted a letter from the table by her side, broke the seal, and handing it to the Vicar, said—"I had written a great deal of stuff, you see, but I thought it would be better just to take courage and speak for myself; so put the letter in the fire if you please, John, and the enclosure in your pocket.

"'Tis two hundred pounds, ma'am," said the Vicar, his face getting quite red—"I protest, I am quite ashamed of this, Mrs. Dalton—I have no need of——"

"Nay, nay," interrupted the good spinster—"there was never a man in the world yet that had as much money as he wanted. 'Tis only an useless old body like me that can lay by money, for not knowing what to do with it; but don't twirl the bill about your fingers so, cousin John; I assure you I wish I had been richer at Lancaster just now, that it might have been worth double the money; and besides, what are you thinking of? 'tis only giving Reginald a few books; I wish I had had wit enough to save you the trouble of choosing them for me."

The Vicar, with true manliness, and true politeness, said no more, but put the bill in his pocket, and pressed with all the warmth of confidence the hand which was extended towards him. Two generous spirits could not be long of understanding each other, and if any slight feeling of awkwardness remained, I take it this was fully more on the side of the donor, than on that of the receiver; however that might be, it was Miss Betty that changed the subject of their conversation.

"Come," she said, "cousin John, come, since we *are* here alone at such an hour as this, why, there's no more harm to be done; let me hear what you think of our visitors today. I don't think you and Sir Charles seemed to take over and above well with each other; and yet you were old acquaintances, were you not? Sure my memory is altogether failing me (here the old lady drew her finger once or twice along the deepest furrow in her brow),—but I think I can't be mistaken, sure you used to meet here at Grypherwast long ago, John?"

"Why, no," said the Vicar, "I really don't think we ever did, ma'am, but we have met ere now. I knew Sir Charles, though very slightly, at Oxford; he entered, I think, just a few terms ere I took my degree, and afterwards we met (here Mr. Dalton's voice sunk a few notes), we met at my own house and elsewhere, in Westmoreland."

"Ay, ay," quoth Miss Betty, "I thought you had met somewhere; I was sure I had heard of it; but why did you look so coldly on each other, then? But pardon me, I see 'tis a disagreeable subject somehow or other—I beg your pardon, John."

"Oh, no begging of pardons, Mrs. Dalton, there's not the least occasion for that: I really do not *know* anything that should make me speak hardly of Sir Charles Catline. A dark, a miserable, a fearful story indeed there is—if there be indeed a sin beyond forgiveness——but no, I shall not say so—no, madam,——I say again that I do *not know* anything of the matter, and even if I did, years, long, long years, have flown over the heads of us all—and who shall limit what is unlimited? he may, even if it were so, I say—he may still be all he seems — God forgive proud human thoughts!"

"Nay, what is this, cousin John?" said she,—"what is all this you are talking of? you have no reason, have you, to think anything *very* bad of Sir Charles?"

The Vicar paused for half a minute, and then said, dropping his eyes, and with very tremulous lips—"'Tis indeed a tale of tears, Miss Elizabeth—but why should I vex you with the telling of it?—I repeat once more, that I have no sort of right to say that I know anything against Sir Charles."

"Come, come, John, you've got a sad story, and you'll be none the worse for telling it out. I need not say your stories are all safely told *here*."

"I know that indeed, ma'am," said he, "I know that well; but I have just one request to make to you, and I must make it ere I say anything of this matter; and that is, that you will promise me *never* to repeat this sad story either to your brother or Miss Dalton. I have a particular reason for making this request."

"God bless me!" said the lady, getting curious, "is that all the matter? You may depend on it, neither they nor any other creature under heaven shall ever hear a single syllable of it from me. I'faith, cousin John, I assure you I have had secrets enow to keep from *them* ere now, though not for my sake, but for their own."

"I know it all well, I do indeed, ma'am," said the Vicar; "but why should I be so foolish? You have said all I wished to hear and you shall have this story, this sad sorrowful story, as freely as I can give it. But first of all, tell me one thing, my dear madam, were you at the last Preston Guild?"

"Ay, indeed was I," quoth Mrs. Elizabeth; "that's not a yesterday's story, John, and yet I remember the one before that, too, as

well as if it happened three months ago. Ah! John, that first Guild I went to was a gay one, and I had a light heart to enjoy it. My brother was newly married, and he, and I, and Mrs. Dalton went all together; we had a coach-and-six, and out-riders, and all sorts of grand things; and there were balls and beaux in plenty. I have the market-place this moment before my eyes—it was a splendid sight, I assure you, quite crowded with fine ladies and fine gentlemen; nothing but the nodding of ostrich feathers from one end of it to the other."

"But the second one, Mrs. Elizabeth, what sort of a thing was it?—it is that I want to hear of?"

"Oh, it was a very pretty Guild, too, I warrant ye, though not, I think, quite like the other; but to be sure I was twenty years older of course, and I don't think any of us were quite in the right sort of glee for the enjoyment of it—I think it fell soon after the time of—of——"

"My marriage," said the Vicar; "yes, it was so indeed, ma'am."

"Well, I thought it must have been so. For I remember Barbara—poor thing—but that's all over now long ago—Barbara would scarcely be persuaded to go with Dick and me. Charles Catline, he was not *Sir* Charles then, for it was before his uncle's death—indeed, the old Admiral himself was at the Guild, I believe—but, however, Mr. Catline was in the house, as it happened, and though he had not much time to spare, he thought, like the rest of us, the variety of a week at Preston might do Barbara good; and so he would take no refusal, and she was at last obliged to give her consent, and we all went down to the Guild, in company with the Curzon family and the Wards of Langthorpe Hall, I think, and a number of strangers besides. Yes—yes, I remember all that went on quite well now. Mr. Catline got some letters the next day after we came to Preston, that made it necessary for him to move southwards sooner than he had intended. I remember he set off very unwillingly, for he was a gay fellow in those days you know; a very gay fellow, and a very comely one too, that I shall say for him, although he was not any great favourite of mine even then, neither—and Barbara was anxious to get home again, and I think we did not stay quite to the end of the gala."

The Vicar had risen from his chair,—"Is it so indeed, madam?" he cried, "are you indeed certain Mr. Catline left Preston the second day of the Guild?"

"Yes, Lord love ye, what does that signify? But I *am* quite sure of it, for I remember Barbara could never be persuaded to go to any of the balls, except the opening one, and he was with us there; sure I danced a bumpkin with the boy myself after supper, the more fool that I was; but there were older fools there to keep me in countenance. —But what is all this to your story, John?"

"In truth, I believe very little—nothing at all I should say," quoth the Vicar; "but no matter, I thought it might have been otherwise; the more shame to me for being so hasty. But I won't trouble you with any more of it.—My poor wife's maiden name, you know, was Ellen Lethwaite."—Mrs. Elizabeth nodded gravely to the Vicar.—"There were two sisters of them, ma'am, and believe me, they were both of them exquisitely beautiful."

"We were always told Mrs. Dalton was a very lovely young woman."

"Yes, she was so indeed, ma'am; but even in my opinion Lucy was quite as handsome as she—she was darker in the complexion, and had larger eyes, and was a more playful creature than my poor Ellen—I never saw such a wild irrepressible flow of spirits about any human being — yet she was a good modest girl for all that."

"I'm to understand that she's gone, Mr. Dalton," said Elizabeth, in a very low tone.

"Yes, indeed, madam; she *is* gone—long, long ago; and that is my dark story."

"Poor girl! what was it that befell her?—Did she die before your Mrs. Dalton?"

"Would to God she had!" said the Vicar. "My poor Ellen would have been spared many a heavy thought. Nay, I sometimes think—but what avails it to dream thus?—The Lord willed it so."

Mrs. Elizabeth edged her chair a little nearer to him, and after a moment he proceeded.

"I don't know how to give you a notion of what Lucy Lethwaite was, Mrs. Elizabeth—she was the very soul of merriment, the best-humoured, laughing girl in the world, for the most part, and yet serious and pensive sometimes too. But one of our Westmoreland poets has described her better than I can ever do. The moment I saw the verses I got them by heart, for I could not help saying to myself, if Lucy had been in the world, I should have sworn this man had seen her."

Mr. Dalton paused, and after whispering to himself for a few moments, repeated slowly, and with a sad emphasis, those delightful lines, which no man need ever make an apology for being able to recite.

"She was a Phantom of delight,
When first she gleam'd upon my sight:
A lovely Apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament;
Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair;
Like Twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful Dawn;
A dancing Shape, an Image gay,
To haunt, and startle, and way-lay.
I saw her upon nearer view,
A Spirit, yet a Woman too!
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin liberty;

A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet;
A Creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles."

"Beautiful verses, truly," quoth Mrs. Elizabeth; "and a beautiful creature she must have been."

"A radiant creature, indeed, Mrs. Elizabeth," quoth the Vicar, "but her fate was a very dark one.—

"It was in the autumn season, if you remember, that I was married; the mother of these two girls had been dead for several years, and their old father, a worthy, honest, good, simple man (a small statesman, ma'am), lived in his forefathers' little cottage, hard by the side of our mere. He was a Catholic, ma'am; but, notwithstanding, we had been good friends ever since I went to Lannwell. When I took Ellen away, I had stript their home of half of its merriment; and you may suppose Lucy was often with her sister and me for days together, at the vicarage, during the winter that followed. The old man sometimes complained a little of being left alone; but, to say truth, I believe he was on the whole well pleased, thinking that Lucy would be improved by living at the vicarage, and perhaps that she too might get a husband rather above their own rank in life. For I need not conceal that Mr. Thomas (Catholic though he was) was exceedingly gratified with our marriage."

"Ay," interrupted Miss Betty, bridling up a little, "and well he might be so, truly."

"However all that might be, Mrs. Elizabeth," proceeded the Vicar—"the old man began to fall off a little in his health towards the spring; he had a severe attack of rheumatic fever, which not only kept Lucy at home, but drew Ellen from me too, that she might assist in nursing him.—When that was over, which it soon was, there was a certain debility left behind, that for some time prevented Lucy from ever thinking of sleeping a night away from home. For indeed, madam, she was a most affectionate creature, and one that would rather have *then* denied herself any gay pleasure, than lost the gratification of doing one act that might contribute in any way to her father's comfort. By this time my wife was in a condition that made it improper for her to walk abroad much; and in short, what between her state and that of the old man, the two households came to have comparatively but few means or opportunities of intercourse through the earlier part of that summer.

"I think it might be towards the latter end of July, and neither my wife nor I had seen Lucy for about a week, I believe, when one evening she came over to the vicarage, dressed a good deal more gaily than was her custom, and attended by a young gentleman, whom Ellen had never heard of before, and whose appearance in that part of the country was quite unexpected by myself—Mr. Catline, I mean."

"Charles Catline, cousin?—well, say on."

"I believe I said already that I had met Mr. Catline at Oxford before that time, but we had never visited each other, nor had anything more than a sort of passing acquaintance. In so remote a part of the country, however, I should certainly have found nothing strange in his calling on me, if he happened to be in my neighbourhood; but his coming in company with Lucy was the thing that surprised me."

"Pooh! pooh! Mr. John," interrupted Betty, "I thought you had just been describing her pretty face."

A very sorrowful smile passed over the Vicar's lips, and that again was chased by a frown—but he paused for a moment, and resumed:—"Mr. Catline, it seemed, had been amusing himself with an angling excursion among our hills, and being smitten with the beautiful situation of a little public-house on the side of our mere, he had rested there for several days—and indeed, over and above the charming situation, he might have sought all the country from Patterdale to Wasswater, without finding a better fishing quarter than ours is; I mean all about Lannwell and Thorwold, and so up to Bonfell; for there are twenty different streams within an easy walk of the inn where he stayed. But Mr. Catline would fain try his hand at trolling for jack in the lake besides; and the boat that belonged to the people of the public-house was in bad order, and they borrowed Thomas Lethwaite's little wherry for him;—and then he must go to thank Thomas for lending it; and the old man was delighted with having a young and expert sportsman to come and chat with him in his chimney-corner—and so, madam, Mr. Catline and our Lucy had become acquainted. In truth, ours is a very simple region, and there was nothing in all this to excite the smallest astonishment.—Mr. Catline was a gay, rattling young man, and he talked very pleasantly about the fine country he had been traversing, and he had Oxford stories too in abundance, and both my wife and I were, on the whole, pleased with him; and as for Lucy, alas! poor girl, she was far too artless to be able to conceal from either of us how much she was flattered with the notion of having so fine a beau as this to squire her. Alas! poor Lucy. I suppose she thought since her sister had married so great a man as the Vicar of Lannwell, there was never a gentleman in England that need be too high to make a husband for herself."

"The young woman would have her dreams, I warrant ye," said our old lady, rather sarcastically.

"Alas, madam," said the Vicar, "but you

never saw Lucy.—But, however, ma'am, after tea away they walked again together, for the inn was quite near to Lethwaite's house, and we saw no more of Lucy for several days.—I confess, ma'am," he proceeded, "I was rather struck when I heard, near a week afterwards, that Mr. Catline was still in our neighbourhod, for to us he had spoken as if he were just on the wing; and, in short, I had confidence in everything about Lucy except her prudence, and I walked over myself to the cottage. In fact, ma'am, I *had* heard Mr. Catline talked of at Oxford as rather a dissipated character, and I began to feel a vague sort of anxiety."

"Well you might—well you might, sir. But go on."

"When I got to the point where the cottage stood—for it stands no longer—I found the old man in his garden; I asked for Lucy, and he answered me at once, and apparently without the least concern, that she had gone out a little while ago with *my friend* Mr. Catline—that he believed they were on the water, but that they would soon be home, no doubt, as the sun had gone down. We turned with that, and looked out upon the lake, and the wherry, to be sure, was in sight. His eyes did not serve him to observe more than that the boat was there; but I, for my part, could easily perceive, not only that there were just two figures in it, but that these were sitting together in the stern. There was scarce wind enough to carry them on at the rate of half-a-knot, but there they were with the sail flapping before them. It was, indeed, a most beautiful, soft, glorious July evening, ma'am, and the lake was like liquid gold all round them: and, said I to myself at the moment, I am sure Lucy never will *be* in heaven more certainly than she *thinks* herself there now." Here Miss Betty tapped her snuff-box once or twice, with a slow and pensive finger, and I rather think she had not sighed so deeply for half a score of winters.

"For a considerable time," proceeded the Vicar, "the boat seemed to lie on the water without making scarce any progress towards the shore; but all of a sudden the sail was pulled down, and I saw the oars in motion. It now came rapidly along, and the old man and I received Lucy and Mr. Catline at the little inlet below their garden. He, I thought, was a little confused, and Lucy's eyes, I could not help noticing, were clouded—indeed I am sure she had been crying. However, Mr. Catline got his tackle out of the boat, and took farewell both of her and her father in my presence, intending, as he said, to be off early next day, having already lost more time than he should have done in their pleasant country. I myself walked with him towards the inn where he had his lodging. We parted at the little inn, ma'am—and I never saw Mr. Catline again, from that hour until this day."

"But the girl—the poor girl, Mr. Dalton.—What became of her? I pray you, let me hear the end of it."

"Why, ma'am, a very few words more will be sufficient. Lucy came over next day to the Vicarage, and she talked freely enough about Mr. Catline and his departure; in truth, after what I had witnessed over-night, I was rather a little surprised to see in what spirits she was; and so indeed it continued for several days. But after that, Mrs. Dalton, Lucy was no longer like herself: She began all of a sudden to mope and pine, and would come over to us with her hair hanging loose about her brows; while as to Mr. Catline, she never said a single word of him. This melancholy hung about the girl for two or three weeks, and then it seemed to pass away from her again just as suddenly as it had come on. Lucy was Lucy herself again; and how delighted were we all to find her so! She joked and laughed as she had used to do—she was once more the liveliest and gayest of all our little circle. The Preston Guild fell that same year, as we have been saying, and Lucy kept continually talking about it, until at length she over-persuaded her father, and he gave his consent to let her go and see the Guild, in company with several of their neighbours—for indeed half the parish, I think, went thither as well as she. But Lucy"—he said the words so low that they could with difficulty be understood—"Lucy never returned!"

"Oh, God! Oh, God!" said Mrs. Dalton: "What became of the poor mad deluded girl?"

"Nay, nay," said the Vicar, once more rising from his chair, "why should I speak on, when I can speak nothing from knowledge? The friends that left Lannwell with Lucy came all home, thinking that she was there before them; and when we found that she had deceived *them* so, what could we think but that she had done so for the sake of gaining time and baffling inquiry? She had left Preston the day before the Guild sports were over. She had told them that she was afraid her father might be taken worse again, and that she had found another acquaintance to see her home in safety. I do confess, madam, my suspicion rested immediately upon Mr. Catline, and it was so indeed with the whole of us; for one of our Lannwell lads had recognised him in the street of Preston."

"Stop a moment," said Mrs. Elizabeth, "let me consider———No, no, John, you were certainly doing him injustice as to this part of it—for now that I have had time to recollect the particulars, I remember we all saw him get into the mail-coach the second day of the Guild; but, as you say, if I understand you aright, the unfortunate young woman did not go off until five or six days after that time. Depend upon it, my recol-

lection is perfectly exact—I will lay my life on it that he went the second day."

The Vicar stood musing for a few seconds —"Indeed, indeed, Mrs. Dalton, I must freely say, that I have no sort of proof whatever to lay against what you have said. My poor wife received a letter from Lucy very soon after we had lost her; it was a very short one indeed, but she conjured us to comfort her father, and called heaven to witness that she was both *happy* and *innocent*. Alas! we could scarcely believe the whole of that story! The letter had no date, but the Bristol postmark was upon it. I had a friend at Bristol, and I instantly applied to him (for my wife was in such a way that I could not leave home myself, I really could not); and he made every sort of inquiry—God knows, gold was not spared, although there was but little of that amongst us;—but it was all in vain. No sort of trace of her could be found anywhere in that part of the country, and the next letter had the Dublin mark, and the next again the Exeter one, and then there was one from London; and in short we were altogether at sea, for it was evident these letters were transmitted from the most opposite quarters on purpose to perplex all our inquiries. At last I did a thing which I *thought* my duty, and that is all I shall now say for myself. I wrote to a friend in Oxford when the Michaelmas term was begun, to ask particularly after Mr. Catline, and the answer I got was, that Mr. Catline had been for some time in France.—Some weeks elapsed ere my friend again wrote to me, saying that he had come back to Oxford and was living in College as usual. The moment I heard of this, I wrote to Mr. Catline himself; and whether or not I had written in improper terms, I can't say, but he returned me for answer my own letter, madam, with merely a note on the outside of it, cautioning me to beware of insulting his honour by any repetition of such impertinent, false, and scandalous imputations—*false* and *scandalous* were the words.—I had not had time to digest this, however, before I received another of quite a different character from him—apologising for his heat—condoling with our affliction,—offering all manner of assistance. What could one think or do?—Whither could we turn? Lucy had been near a week at Preston, living a racketing life among strangers of all sorts—dancing, as we could hear, and flirting with fifty people—what could we make of it? How her folly had begun we knew, but how or in what it had ended, we were unable to divine. Wearied and worn out with so many fruitless attempts, we at last gave it up as a hopeless matter. My wife, meantime, was sickening worse and worse in body and in mind—and Reginald was born—and then she drooped more rapidly than ever—until I was left alone in the world with my poor little orphan boy. As for the broken-hearted old man, oh, Mrs. Elizabeth, could Lucy have seen his condition!—Nobody to comfort him but myself, and now and then a call from the old Priest from Lottesmore. — But he too died, and was at rest."

Mrs. Elizabeth motioned to the Vicar to resume his chair. He did so in silence, and in paleness.—She kept her eyes for some time fixed upon his dejected countenance,—at last "The thing is just possible," she began,—"the thing may have been so—for there is no saying how deeply cunning may lay its snares. But 'tis very hard, after all, to be hasty in such matters. Sir Charles was married very soon after the time you have been speaking of, Mr. Dalton."

"Ay," said the Vicar, endeavouring to rouse himself, "and so indeed he was, my dear madam. We heard of his coming to his title, and then of his wedding. In truth, ma'am, I had before that time almost worked myself out of the notions I had taken up as to him; and when we saw his wedding in the papers so very soon after the thing happened, why, that no doubt confirmed me in the idea that he was innocent as to Lucy. Other things had since, I must confess, revived some of my old suspicions—and to-day I will own to you, when I saw him for the first time, there was something in his look that I could not fathom. Ah, if indeed it were so, with what—but once more, *no*:—God, madam, God knows all things—we are poor blind creatures, and often enough uncharitable in our blindness.—As for poor Lucy, after the lapse of a few months more, we ceased to hear from her—her last letters were quite wild some of them, others as melancholy things as you can imagine, and the last of all contained a lock of her hair. Ah! me madam, a sad, a woeful heart must have been hers when she wrote that letter, for the curl and the paper were all stained and glued together with tears."

"She died then!" quoth Elizabeth—"you have no doubt she was ill and died."

"Doubt, ma'am? Indeed we could not help doubting everything; but our hope, our only, our miserable hope, is that Lucy died then. To think that she could have lived on without having anything to say to her friends, would have been worst of all."

"Indeed it would," said Miss Betty, "you are quite right there. Well, I shall drop a hint or two that will bring some light upon the matter. I warrant you, he will know what I allude to, and if he really be the man, I think I shall be able to read his looks."

"I beseech you, ma'am," said the Vicar, "I beseech you to do nothing of this kind. Even if he *had* been guilty then, years and years have passed away, and who shall say that he might not have repented, and been forgiven, even of such deadly sin as that?—But once again I protest to you, that I no longer blame Sir Charles Catline—unless,

indeed (for *that* I ever must do), for having thrown Lucy's mind first off its balance, by strolling about the woods with her so, and rowing her out upon the mere, and flattering her, no doubt ;—for it was flattery that was her ruin. But above all, Mrs. Dalton, remember, I pray you, that Sir Charles Catline has a wife and a family. What right can any of us have to do anything that might tend to breed uneasiness and distrust among them?"

"Uneasiness and distrust among *them*, indeed!" said the old lady, shaking her head with an air of great derision—"Why, did you not see enough of them to-day, to satisfy you, that they are all at sixes and sevens and cross purposes already, as much as they ever can be? He hates his wife, Mr. Dalton."

"Indeed!—Well, I could perceive from Lady Catline's conversation, that she has not the same way of thinking as to religious matters. But, for my part, it seemed to me, that Sir Charles treated her with great kindness."

"You mean, I suppose, that he always called her, 'Julia, my love,' or, 'my dear Julia.'—Ha! ha! Mr. John, is that all the length you can see through a mill-stone? Depend on it, sir, there is not a more unhappy woman at home in England—but, indeed, much of that is her own fault, for she's a silly creature at the best."

"A very talkative lady, indeed," quoth the Vicar; "very fond of hearing her own voice, as it seemed to me."

"Ah, poor body! I suppose 'tis a luxury she is not much indulged in, except when she's abroad. Well, what a change from the first months of their marriage!"

"They were happy and fond then, no question?"

"To be sure, Mr. Dalton; who, for that matter, are not happy and fond *then?* But between ourselves, my good friend, I believe Sir Charles has never been the same man to her since her father's bankruptcy. He had married her, perhaps you might hear at the time, under the notion that she was to be a mighty great heiress. Her father was a topping person in his way at Liverpool—a very vulgar low-bred man, everybody said, notwithstanding—and he, forsooth, must have a fine villa on Windermere, and he used to come down thither with this daughter of his in the summer-time, and keep a very full noisy house in great splendour. But the north-country gentry, you know, are but shy of such people; at least, it was so *then*, John;—and except perhaps at an Ambleside ball, or a Bo'ness regatta, once in the season, the Spankies were but rarely to be seen in the same room with the old families of the county. Miss, again, who had been at a Bath boarding-school, was rather inclined to turn up her nose at the showy boobies of merchants her father had about the house, and what between her ambition, and the coldness of her country neighbours, I believe she would have been happier anywhere else than in their gaudy bauble of a cottage *ornée*, stuck down there beneath the shadow, as it were, of a set of old stately halls, to which Pride gave them no access. Sir Charles, in the mean time, had just succeeded to his uncle the Admiral's title, but though he had expected a great deal, the title was really almost the whole of his succession. For the Admiral, old Sir William, was an open-handed, free-hearted man—and he was almost devoured out of house and home by the host of old half-pay acquaintances, and so forth, that were always nestling about him after he had settled at Little-Pyesworth. And over and above all this, there was a dirty fellow, of the name of Jennings, that had once been the old gentleman's secretary, when he commanded on the Cork station, and this man had taken up a sort of trade of being executor to people, and he contrived to wind himself sadly about the Admiral; and after the affairs were all looked into, and the executor's legacy paid, there was really, as I was saying, but a poor remainder for Sir Charles. In the mean time he had, it was well known, spent a good deal of money himself, thinking he was sure of a fine fortune from the Admiral; and, in short, he was but a poor young baronet, at least compared to what he had always thought he was to be.

"He had met with these Spankies—in the course of the very fishing excursion, I rather think, you were talking of—and now away he went again to the Lake-country, and the first news we had was that everything was arranged for a wedding between him and the rich Liverpool man's only daughter. My brother and Barbara went over to Windermere, and were present at the ceremony, and the young people came soon after to Little-Pyesworth, and began to keep house in the same dashing way the Admiral had done, or perhaps even rather more extravagantly. But what sort of a folly is it to build upon the notion of a mercantile person's wealth! In the course of time old Spankie went all to shivers; and since then, to be sure, Sir Charles and Lady Catline have been obliged to make a great change in their way of living.

"Well, sir, it was not long after the failure, before Sir Charles first began to take up with the same religious notions that poor Barbara had betrayed her great fondness of, long ere then; and ever since, you know, we have heard of nothing but Missionary Societies, and Bible Societies, and Tract Societies, and travelling ministers, and Sunday Schools, and all the rest of it. But as for Barbara, I sometimes think 'tis, after all, a mercy that she has found something to occupy so much of her time and thoughts—and then, my dear Mr. Dalton, there *is* such a deal that is very good and amiable about her ways of going

on, though I cannot for one be persuaded that it is at all necessary to carry things quite so far. Poor thing, I am sure I sometimes think she must be in the right, and I in the wrong, when I see her working her fingers off for poor old people and children, in the hardest season of winter."

"Nay, nay," says the Vicar, "this is assuredly being too tender-conscienced. Why, my dear madam, who can believe that it is either the business or the duty of a lady in Miss Dalton's situation to spend her time in the hemming of flannel petticoats? Far wiser, and far kinder too, to employ the poor that can work, in working for those that cannot. But although it be a mistake, God forbid that we should not reverence the amiable feelings from which it arises."

"God forbid that, indeed," quoth the old lady. "Heavens, what a difference between such a creature as my niece, and that sister-in-law of hers, for example!—a talking, chattering, idle, gaudy fool, that never does a single turn either for her own family, or for her poor neighbours, but sits at home mum, like a dormouse, devouring silly novels and reviews from morning till night, and then comes abroad with a tongue that goes like a mill-clack after a thaw; and she's bringing up that second Miss of hers, her own namesake, to be just such another. But the elder one, as you must have noticed, takes more after the father. She is a wonderful favourite with our Barbara; but I am sure I don't believe one half of her serious speeches can be sincere; for 'tis not natural, Mr. Dalton. I have no notion of your devout misses in their teens. Lord bless me! what can be more absurd? one's heart is all in such a whirl and bustle at that time of day."

Here the Vicar smiled a little. "Upon my word, Miss Betty," said he, "when a comely young girl takes such a turn, it may be great uncharitableness, but I can scarce ever help thinking that it is only for want of some pretty young fellow to whisper it out of her in the course of a week, and put anything he pleases in its place."

The old lady tapped her snuff-box with a smile, rather tending to the disdainful, and then said, after dividing her pinch into three or four very deliberate instalments, "Upon my word, Mr. John, I think even the parsons among you seem to have a very sweet opinion of themselves."

With that she rung for her maid (who, *par parenthèse*, was at no great distance all this while), and dismissed the Vicar with another very cordial shake of her hand.

CHAPTER XIII.

DEPARTURE FOR OXFORD.

REGINALD, Chisney, and the Vicar also, had done ample justice to their cold pasty and muffins next morning, ere they were invited by Mr. Bishop, *in propria persona*, to visit the Squire in his bed-room. They found the old gentleman lying in great state, with a night-cap as tall as Lord Peter's triple crown in the old prints to the Tale of a Tub, a pot of chocolate simmering over a spirit-lamp on his night-table, and a good fire of rifted pine-root shedding a warm blaze upon his bed-curtains. The room was a picturesque one;—its lofty roof, divided into innumerable small compartments, exhibited in each of them some old Lancastrian coat of arms; its walls were hung with tapestry, representing some of the most grotesque attitudes in the Duke of Newcastle's horsemanship; one huge dark panel over the mantel-piece was occupied by a star-shaped ornament, the centre thereof being a yeomanry helmet of lackered leather, with pewter cheek-pieces—and the *radii* a motley group of rapiers, bayonets, daggers, and broad-swords. A tall old French looking-glass set in frame-work of chased silver—a relic of the ambassadorial splendour of some defunct Dalton—was conspicuous in one corner; and from another stared a flashy water-coloured portrait of a favourite pointer-bitch.

"Ha!" said the old man when they entered his dormitory, "and so you are all booted and ready for the road? *You* might have staid a single day more with me, I think, John Dalton, if it were but to console me for losing these sparks so soon. Well, ods my life, 'tis a long look now back to the morning, when *I* came into this very room to take farewell of my own good father on setting off for Alma Mater! And yet as I live, cousin Vicar, it seems as if it were not so long ago neither. God bless my soul, I remember everything that happened. There—just where Mr. Frederick is standing—there was my mother, rest her kind soul, with a very doleful face I promise ye, and a fine new prayer-book, that she had got ready for me, in her hands. And here, ay, here in this very bed, sirs, lay the good Squire, setting the best front on the thing he could; but sorely his hand shook, for all that, when he squeezed mine. Ah, cousin John, little did I think it was the last time I was ever to see him; he was ailing, but he was barely forty. What a melancholy home-coming was mine—all the house in lamentation—my mother a widow, poor soul—and Betty running out to meet me with a heart like to break. Ah, my young friends, it had been a merry household that was broken up that day! God bless you, my good lads—you'll perhaps never see all you are parting with to-day again—but what avails speaking of such things? Be good boys,—and fear God and honour the King, my dears,—and keep light hearts as long as you can, and take the world while it is before ye; for its face, mayhap, won't always be quite so bright as it is now."

"Indeed, indeed, my dear Sir," said the Vicar of Lannwell, "I trust our young friends will not forget these things, when they are far away from us. I trust Reginald will come back unspoiled to us, and enjoy a merry meeting with us all, when the long vacation comes round."

"Yes, yes," quoth the Squire, raising himself up in his bed—"let us hope the best, let us hope all that is good and pleasant; for, do the best we can, a parting is a pain. But, above all, look sharp to yourself, Reginald, boy—have a care that you don't come back either a Whig or a Methodist."

"I'll be bound he shan't," cried Chisney. "By Jupiter, we'll make minced meat of the buck, if he ever dares but to be detected within smell of St. Edmund's Hall, or insult CHURCH AND KING with a single hair's-breadth of day-light."

"There spoke a true boy," quoth the Squire, with a hearty chuckle. "Everlastingly confound all traitors and rebels, say I; for what, in Heaven's name, are our Whigs but rebels? Aren't they doing all they can, rot 'em, to let Buonaparte have his own way? aren't they piping everywhere against honest old George, and trying, what they can, to rail his old English heart out of his bosom? and who are they but the devil's children for doing so? has not old Sam Butler told us the truth long ago?

> 'The devil was the first o' the name,
> From whom the race of rebels came;
> He was the first bold undertaker
> Of bearing arms against his Maker.'

But Billy's Spirit at least is at the helm, yet, my lads, and Sir Arthur's the boy—God bless him, he's the boy that will do for all their bastardly Monsieurs! Who the deuce cares for what Holland-house and Sheridan, and all their rabble can do?—We'll do yet, mind me, my boys, we'll do yet—O, d—n them all, I hope I shall live to see the end of them yet."

"Nay, nay," said the Vicar, "perhaps the end of the struggle is not quite so near yet; but spite of all, why should we be cast down? We *are* in the right, my dear sir, and the right *will* prevail in the long run."

"To be sure it will, and it must," cried Chisney.

> "Oh! quid Typhæus et validus Mimas,
> Aut quid minaci Porphyrion statu,
> Quid Rhætus, *evulsisque truncis*
> Enceladus, jaculator audax,
> Contra sonantem Palladis ægida
> Possent ruentes?"

"Virgil for a tester," cries the Squire, "Ah! God bless us, what are all your new poets they make such a din about to old Virgil?

'Arma virumque cano, Trojæ qui primus ab oris!'

Match me that if you can—match me that if you can, out of all your psalm-singing, piperly Cowpers and Hayleys. Ay, ay, stick to your books, Reginald; see what a fine thing it is to be able to quote Virgil off-hand like Frederick Chisney there. Ah, bless me, I could have done something in that way once myself—but no matter, past praying for now, my buck. Bring me these books there off the table, I laid out one a-piece for you overnight, and my spectacle-case is beside them."

Reginald handed a couple of very comely vellum-bound volumes to the Squire, who, after putting on his spectacles and looking at the title-pages, said, "Ay, here it is, here's a Greek one for you, Frederick; 'tis Sophocles, man, a very fine author was Sophocles, but I dare say you have him all at your finger-ends; and here, Reginald, my cock, here's Virgil himself for you. Take good care of him, now, for it was the great Doctor Dalton's own copy—the great Jeremy Dalton, Dean of Winchester, you know. You'll see his arms there on the first leaf, and I've put your own name below it, with my best wishes, and may you live to be an honour and a credit to the name you bear, my lad. And now a good journey to you all—and you, Mr. Vicar, remember we're to see you when the Yule-log's lighted.'

So saying, the Squire shook them all very tenderly by the hand, and they turned from his bedside; but just as Reginald, who walked last, was passing the threshold of the room, the old gentleman called him back again in a whisper. "Here," said he, "my dear lad, come here for a moment; take this too with you, from your kinsman—nay, don't colour up so,—don't stare one in the face, boy—wer'n't they your fore-elders as well as mine that drew the old acres together? take it, boy, and heartily welcome you are, and may God Almighty bless you. Put it in your pocket, though, for you need not be blabbing."

With that the Squire thrust into Reginald's hesitating hand a little silken purse which he had drawn from underneath his pillow, and with an admonitory and intelligent wink sent him once more out of the room.

Barbara Dalton was not yet stirring, but Mrs Elizabeth was the bearer of her "kind good wishes" to all the party, and of a small packet addressed to Reginald. "I dare say," whispered the old lady, "'tis some very good book, my dear, and 'tis kindly meant, at any rate." [In point of fact it was Kirke White.] At the same time Miss Betty presented the boy with an old-fashioned little silver tooth-pick-case, which she begged him to accept of as a mark of "a very old woman's regard." She kissed both him and his father on the cheek, saw them all fairly on horseback, and was still lingering at the Hall-gate when they turned the corner into the village lane.

It may be about a couple of miles from Grypherwast to the great northern road, and the Vicar insisted on going so far out of his

way, that he might see them fairly embarked in their diligence. They all rode together at a brisk pace; but even if they had been going never so slowly, there was such a weight at the Vicar's heart, and at young Reginald's too, that I doubt if either of them would have been able to trust himself with many words.

As it happened, the horn was heard near and loud just as they reached the alehouse to which the young men's luggage had been sent on. It was the first vehicle of the kind our hero had ever seen, and no doubt it appeared to him a very splendid affair in its way; for it was, in truth, not only one of the largest and heaviest, but one of the gayest and gaudiest also of all possible stage-coaches. It bore the then all-predominant name of the hero of Trafalgar, and blazing daubs of Neptunes, Bellonas, and Britannias illuminated every panel that could be spared from a flourishing catalogue of inns and proprietors. The conductor was a cheerful-looking old fellow, with a regular beer face, and the bulk of a Hercules. A young woman ran out with a foaming can the moment the coach stopped, and our friend had scarce finished the welcome and expected draught, ere both the portmanteaus and their masters were safely stowed on board.

Perhaps the moment when the Admiral Nelson was once more under weigh, was the saddest that had yet occurred in Reginald Dalton's life. His father's eye and his continued fixed upon each other—but a moment more, and that last painful pleasure too was among the *fuits*.

Chisney, meantime, who had gone outside, was exerting all his eloquence to coax the old man's ribbons out of his fingers, and in five minutes time this high piece of academical ambition was gratified.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SPILL.

MR. REGINALD had been for perhaps the best part of an hour indulging in meditations sad enough, and solitary too—for there was only only one inside passenger besides himself, and she was a very drowsy woman—when the Admiral pulled up opposite to a small but handsome gateway, where two gentlemen were standing, as if in expectation of the arrival of the vehicle. One of these was Sir Charles Catline, who seemed to look a little surprised on recognising our two young men, but next moment came up and saluted them both with a degree of bland and courteous suavity, such as his demeanour at Grypherwast Hall on the preceding day had not prepared either of them to expect. To Reginald, in particular, he addressed so many kind inquiries, and expressed so many kind wishes, and all this in a manner so perfectly free and unembarrassed, that the boy could scarcely believe it was the same person whose cold, shrinking, formal civilities had so lately excited somewhat of his spleen. The Baronet's companion was a strong, robust, thick-set, hard-visaged man, apparently about sixty, dressed in black clothes, huge mud-boots, a hairy cap of formidable roughness, and a cloak of dingy tartan. He shook Sir Charles by the hand, and observing with a sage nod, "that the best o' friends maun pairt," hoisted himself into the Diligence, and took his place opposite to Reginald.

This personage, after a single "gude day, sir," sat quite silent for some time. At length he handed his large silver snuff-box towards the boy, which Reginald declined by a gesture that at once acknowledged the civility, and told his own perfect inexperience of the nicotian luxury. The stranger hereupon indulged his own nostrils with an abundant pinch, and then drumming on the lid with his yet occupied finger and thumb, said in a high strong tone, that would have overcome all the rattling of fifty wheels—"Ye've gotten a wae look wi' you, I think, my young friend—ye're new frae hame, nae doubt; ye'll hae just be pairtin wi' your folk, I'se warrant."

"You have guessed quite rightly, sir," said Reginald, smiling the best way he could; "I have just left home for the first time in my life."

"Ay, I thought it behoved to be so," quoth the Scot, "an' ye'll no be come ony great feck o' gait yet, I'm thinking?"

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Reginald, "but I really don't perfectly understand you."

"You'll no be far from your home yet, I was saying" (quoth he in a tone yet higher than before); "I saw ye were acquainted wi' my friend Sir Charles—yon's a bonny bit place o' his, yon Little-Pyesworth."

"I only saw the upper part of the house, over the hedgerow. It seemed a neat little park, sir."

"Ay, ay, a vera bonny bit place indeed—a pleasant house, sir, a very pleasant house inside, and a fine family—a very engaging family, sir.—Everything very comfortable yonder, sir—a very bien bit yon. May I take the freedom to ask if 'tis near this ye bide yourself, sir?"

"I live in Westmoreland, sir; but I have some relations in this neighbourhood."

"An you've just been taking your leave o' them a'? and hoo far are ye going (if I may speer the question)? Are we to have the pleasure of your company as far as Manchester? Or 'tis maybe Liverpool ye're for; there's an unco deal of young lads goes to Liverpool now-a-days."

"I am going to Oxford," said Reginald; "I am just about to be entered at College."

"Ay, ay, 'tis Oxford College ye're for, is it? But od, man, are ye no rather ahint the hand? are ye no rather auld for beginning to be a collegianer"

"I believe," said the youth, smiling modestly — "I believe 'tis not common to go much sooner to the University—I am barely eighteen, sir."

"Eighteen!" said the stranger; "and ca' ye that going early to the College? Od, man, I was a Maister o' Airts myself ere I was that time o' day."

"Were you at Oxford, sir?" said the boy.

"Oxford indeed!" quoth the stranger; "na, na, my man, I didna go quite so far frae hame for my lair. I gaed through my *curriculum* just where I was born and bred —in bonny Sant Andrews."

"Ah!" said Reginald, "I have heard of Saint Andrews. 'Tis one of the Scotch archbishopricks, is it not, sir?"

"An archbishoprick, said ye?" quoth the other. "Od, but your education has been a little negleckit, I'm thinking, my man. Did ye really think we had bishopricks and archbishopricks in our country?"

"I beg your pardon," said Reginald, colouring rather sheepishly. "I was aware that Presbyterianism is the established religion in your country; but I had understood that you had still an Episcopal Church remaining there also."

"Ou ay," quoth the stranger; "ou ay, sir, it was that ye was driving at, was it? My certy, we have an Episcopal Church, no doubt and a bonny-like church it is, I warrant ye, and very good bishops too, sir,—most apostolical chields, reverend and right reverend bishops too, wi' their tale, man—although I'm thinking ye wadna maybe think vera meikle o' them, if ye saw them, ony mair than my Lord Stafford's south-country flunkies, when he first brought them down wi' him till Dunrobin—him that's married on the Countess of Sutherland, ye ken."

"Lord Stafford's *what*, I pray you, sir?"

"His flunkies, man, his servant-men, his *valets-de-chambres*, and French cooks, and fat blawn-up English butlers, no offence to you, and a' the rest of siclike clanjamphray."

"Well, sir, and what did all these fine gentlemen say to the Scotch bishops?"

"What did they say to them? Od, they said but vera little matter, sir. Ye see my lord and my leddy, and a' their train, are coming north in great form—after their wedding, just as ye may suppose; and they're lying a night at some small town on their journey; and thae braw English chields, and gay upsetting leddy's-maids, that are mair plague and fash aboot a house than fifty coontesses, they hear some Episcopals that were down-stairs (for there's a deal of them in that part of the country yet) talking and talking away amang themselves about the bishop and the bishop—and that their bishop, forsooth, was to come in the next day for a *confirmation*, I think ye call it; and so up gangs ane o' them to my lord and my leddy wi' a humble request and petition, that they be allowed to stay a while ahint their time the morn's morning, to see the bishop mak his entry into the town. My lord, ye ken, would most likely ken little about thae matters then; but my leddy she was up to the joke in no time; and to be sure, they got leave to stay and take their glower at the bishop, puir creatures. Out they a' gang to the end of the town, and there they rank themselves in a grand raw by the roadside. They hing on for an hour or twa, and are wonderfu' surprised, no doubt, to see no crowd gathering, binna a wheen o' the town bairns, that had come out to look at their ainsells; but at last and at length, up comes a decent little auld manny, in a black coat and velveteen breeches, riding on a bit broken-kneed hirplin beast of a Heeland powney, wi' a red and white checked napkin tied round his neck, and a bit auld ravel of a spur on ane o' his heels, and the coat-tails o' him pinned up before wi' twa corkin preens, to keep them frae being filed with the auld shelty's white hairs coming aff; and up steps ane o' our braw liverymen, and 'My good man,' says he, 'can you have the koindness to inform us, if My Lord Bishop's likely to arrive soon; for we've been waiting here ever since breakfast to see his lordship make his entrance.' — 'Fat's that ye're saying, folk?' says the man. 'Troth, if ye've been waiting for the bishop, ye may e'en gang your wa's hame again now; for I'm a' ye'll get for him,' quo' he; and sae on he joggit, to be sure, saddlebags and a', puir body!—And now what think ye o' our bishops, my man?"

"I perceive that their church is poor," says Reginald; "but I don't see why they should not be worthy men, ay, and right bishops too, notwithstanding. The earliest among their predecessors were poorer still."

"Ay, in truth were they," cries our kindly Scot; "and if nane o' their successors had ever been richer, it would have been telling a' body but themsels;—but I crave your grace, young gentleman, ye'll maybe be designing for that line yoursel. Are you, freends thinking to mak a minister o' you, young man?"

"Indeed I have not thought much of these things as yet; but my father is in the church."

"Hoo mony chaulders may't run?"

"I beg your pardon, sir, I really don't——"

"Hoot, man! I was only asking what the steepend might come to."

"Stipend, sir! I really don't understand you. He's Vicar of Lannwell."

"Ay, just so; and it's a braw fat kirk I houp for your sake; for no doubt ye'll be ettlin to stap in helper and successor, when ye're done wi' your courses."

"My *courses!*—Once more, sir——"

"Ay, your courses, your classes, your Col-

lege courses, man; how mony years will't tak ye, or ye can be through the Hall?"

"The Hall, sir? I rather think I shall be of * * * College."

"I meant the Deveenity-hall, man; but that's a lang look yet. Wha's your Professor o' Humanity?"

"Humanity, sir! I never heard of such a professorship."

"Latin, then, man; I'm sure Latin and Humanity's a' ae thing."

"Nay, indeed," said Reginald, laughing; "I fear we're always to be at cross-purposes, sir—I fear we shall never understand each other."

"Nae great matter, maybe," muttered the Scot, wrapping his plaid close about his chin. —"Ye'll maybe have heard," he added, after a pause, "of such a book as Ovid's Epistles."

"Surely, sir, I have both heard of and read them," said Reginald.

"And yet, under favour, ye dinna appear to have made meikle hand of the twa bonniest and wisest lines in them a';" and with that he spouted, with an air of considerable self-satisfaction, in his broad coarse note,

—"Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes,
Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros."

But the lines were scarcely uttered, ere an unfortunate accident interrupted him. A certain individual, by name, or rather by nickname, "Benjamin the Waggoner"—(by the way, he has since had the honour to be "married to mortal verse"),—had, most immorally and unpoetically, lingered to drink a pot of purl with a pedlar of the name of Peter Bell, and some other old acquaintances, whom he had casually met with, at a little hedge alehouse, about a hundred yards off. Benjamin's team, however, not being invited to be of the purl-party, had thought proper to proceed on their journey towards Shap, which they well knew it was their duty to reach before next morning:—Peter Bell's jackass, trotting very gallantly by the side of the brown mare, had somewhat discomposed the line of march; and, in brief, Master Chisney, being a bold rather than a blameless whip, had suffered part of the Admiral's tackling to come in contact with one of those enormous circles, upon which that hugest of all moving things was rolling its slow length along. Jolt went the whole concern with a stagger, such as Benjamin the purl-swigger himself had never exhibited to human eyes—away flew the old coachman, right over the hedge, like a cork out of a champagne bottle—crack went the drowsy lady's head against the smashing pane —in short, it was

"Disaster dire, and total overthrow,"

although, luckily, there was neither life lost nor bone broken.

The fat woman made a most bitter outcry, which, considering the bleeding nose, and the weight of the superincumbent Scotchman together, was not wonderful; but he, without taking much notice of her lamentations, soon sprawled himself out of the upper window, and was seated in security upon the horizontal panel of the Admiral Nelson. Reginald, forcing the door open, extricated as he best might the poor widow and himself, but thought of nothing but Chisney, when he saw that unfortunate Jehu stretched apparently lifeless upon the ground. He lifted him up, and dashing a handful of ditch water on his brow, had the satisfaction to see him open his eyes almost immediately. The young man closed them with a quick involuntary shudder, as the image of the giant wheel grinding close past his ear again rose on his fancy; while the son of Caledonia, adjusting some of his own discomposed habiliments, and at the same time making a narrow scrutiny of the marks on the road, said, in an accent of most Hyperborean tenderness—"My troth, gin yon chield had shaved twa inches nearer you, your head, my man, would have lookit very like a bluidy pancake. This will learn ye, again, ye young ramshackle! How daur ye, sir, how daur ye pit Christian folk intill sic jeopardy, how daur ye?"

Chisney's eye was just beginning to flame upon the North Briton, when Benjamin the waggoner, and a few more of the purl party [—all of them, indeed, except Mr. P. Bell, who ran on furiously with his "sapling white as cream"—] came up with reeling steps and steaming faces, to assist in setting the coach to rights. The old coachman, who had been much less hurt than Frederick, was far too sensible of his own situation to make half so speedy a recovery; but after a sufficient allowance of rubbing, sighing, and cursing, he also joined the company by the side of his prostrate vehicle, and the horses having fortunately made no effort to stir after the crash, the Admiral was ere long hoisted once more on his beam-ends, by the united exertions of the whole assemblage.

Chisney and our other friends being all seated together within the coach, sour and cold looks prevailed for a season, and total silence, save a continued low moaning from the female sufferer, who kept sea-sawing up and down with her head in a most deplorable fashion. The first who spoke was a Scotchman:—offering a pinch (his perpetual panacea) to the groaning old lady, he remarked to her in a sort of consolatory whisper—"I have no doubt, a very fair action will lie, mem; particularly if any of the teeth be out, there will be no question of very pretty damages—very pretty damages, indeed—very sweet damages. I dare say the proprietors are very sponsible folk, mem."

"What the devil have *you* got to do with the business, sir?" cried Frederick, sharply.

"O nothing, nothing at all, young gentleman. If the leddy pleases to take her battered

chops and say nothing about it, 'tis her own affair, sir; there's no question, 'tis all her own business; but if it had been *me* that it had happened to, friend, I can tell you there should have been twa words or *we* pairted—that's all, sir. No offence, no offence."

"Now, jontlemen, jontlemen," interjected the wounded woman, taking her bloody handkerchief from her mouth, "do not make a quarrel about it, for the love of grace—do not make a quarrel in the coach, swate jontlemen; for the blading is stopt, and I'm sure the young man did not mane to do us any harm."

"Weel, weel, madam, you're of a very Christian forgiveness truly, that's all I sall say, madam. Tak your ain gait though, by a' means."

This was said with such an intolerable air of contempt, that the old lady's spirit could not digest it.—"An indade, sir," said she, taking a hearty snuff of her smelling-bottle, "I think *you* might just as well say little about the matter, for now that my nose is done blading, barrin the tramp *you* gave me when you climbed out at the window, I should have been nothing the worse for it at all, at all. I believe the mark will stay with me for a month," she added; "and sich an indacent thing it was for a gintleman to look to himself first, when there was a wuman below him—I'm sure I dare say the young man never did sich a thing in his born dees."

The Scotsman staring her full in the face, with a grin not of malice but of *malicé*, said, in quite a different tone from what he had hitherto spoken in, "he's a very pretty young man, mem; is not he a very nate proper lad? is not he weel set on his shanks, mem? for I dare say ye've an experienced skilful ee as to a' sic matters."

"I squorns your words," was the reply, "I squorns your words, sir, and you're no jontleman, sir, to make sich an insinivation to any lady; and I beg you to take notice, sir, that I *am* a lady, though I rides in a steege-coach—and my name, if you wish for to have it, is O'Moore—and my husband that's dead and gone, bliss him and rist him, was an O'Donnell; and, sure as peas, I'm much to seek if there's e'er a wan o' ye has a prettier name for to go to market with!"

"Ha! an O'Moore," cried Chisney, with an air of enthusiasm, "who can ever hear the name without respect? Who can ever forget the glorious lines—

'O ye heroes so high and so haughty of yore,
O'Donnell, O'Hara, O'Mara, O'Moore!
All houses so noble, so worthy, so old,
Every drop of your blood is worth ounces of gold.'"

"Don't mintion it, don't mintion it, my swate young masther," so said, or rather so sobbed, the daughter of the Milesian, once more cramming her rosy countenance into the obscurity of the pocket-handkerchief.

"I am sure, mem," cried the Scotchman, relaxing the rigidity of his grin into a very courteous simper, "I am sure, nobody can have a greater respect for you than myself, and why should not I tell you the truth, since it is the truth? Do you know, I must crave your permission to look upon myself as in some sort your kinsman."

"There's ne'er a Scot of ye all is my kinsman," cried the unbending dame.

"I don't knaw that, mem," he continued; "I'm really very far from agreeing with you, as to that point, mem. My own name is Macdonald, mem, and 'tis well knawn that we're all originally from the same root."

"There's been many a sore graft in the tree then," whispered Mrs. Paddy—but whether the Scot heard her or not, I am uncertain. He handed the snuff-box once more, and he did it with such an air of conciliation, that she could no longer resist him. In short, there was great good humour among the party, long before they stopt to dinner at Proud Preston. Mrs. O'Donnell took the head of the table, Mr. Macdonald the foot, and the two boys forgetting, the one his bad driving, and the other his *maladie des adieux*, the whole quartette sympathised in paying devoted attention to a superb round of beef, a turkey, a sucking pig, turnips, carrots, and a portentous apple dumpling,—all which, according to a custom not yet denounced by the Lancastrian Kitcheners, had been fished out of the same pot.

A good-humoured controversy arose after dinner, who should have the honour of paying for Mrs. O'Donnell's share. "Na, na," said the Scotchman; "I'll take nae denials—It's my right to take this matter on me—bluid's thicker than water, ye ken."

"For that very reason," said Chisney slyly, pointing to the handkerchief,—"I insist upon it."

"Haud your tongues, bairns," quoth Macdonald. "Od, ye're but twa lads on the way to the College; and my certy, ye maun be rifer a deal o' siller than I was at that time o' day, if ye hae mair bawbees than you'll hae occasion for. Let me stand to the shot, I say. Do you no see that I might be your father, man? What signifies sic clishmaclavering? Pay your ain half-crowns, callants."

So saying, the generous son of Morven conducted the no longer disdainful Milesian to her seat in the vehicle. "What a beautiful, beautiful town!" cried Reginald, as they were about to get in.

"Beautiful, indeed!" echoed Chisney.

"Gae wa', gae wa'," roared Saunders, "ye've never seen Bonny Dundee, my boys; but the toon's a very descent bit toon, no question, for a' that."

CHAPTER XV.

PLEASANT TRAVELLING.

It was, after all, a stupid notion of Mr. Galt's to write a book about a "Steam-Boat."—A Steam-Boat has all the disadvantages of a hoy or a smack—I mean, all the discomforts—and it has a thousand new ones of its own besides. Its inflexible pertinacity—its always sticking to the proper point of the compass—its main chance—is disgusting: the clack of the oily machinery is monotonous as Rogers; if you go away from the mast-chimney you shiver, and, if you stand near it, your clothes are seethed about your body, from the escape-valves. Smoking is forbidden upon deck—a piece of tyranny, as indefensible as would be that of preventing a boy from setting off his squib in the neighbourhood of an ordnance review—and down below, if you are not sick yourself, you are surrounded with frowsy old women; ugly old men, afraid of open windows; squalling, sprawling children; Cockney tourists with red morocco memorandum-books; noblemen's servants, passing themselves off for gentlemen at large; squeamish girls going to the boarding-school; pleasuring shop-keepers, sentimental conveyancers, and sulky H. P.'s.—Such a mode of existence is destructive of individual comfort, and the mortal enemy of all social intercourse. The dishes are greasy, the spoons are pewter, the table-cloth is dowlass, the beer vapid, the port black poison, and the motion a weariness of the flesh. What are swiftness and cheapness, to set against such a conglomeration of bores? Had the ancients foreseen Watt and Bolton, old Charon would certainly have had a steam-boat for his "σκαφιδιον."—No,—I can forgive my friend Galt his "Wheelie"—ay, even his "Cardinal Wolsey," or his "Earthquake," more easily than this.

Nothing in human life is more delightful, on the other hand, than a journey in a stage-coach. Comfortable cushions prop your back and your sides; the world is whirled along in your view, like a perpetual panorama; your friend sits opposite to you as comfortable as yourself, and you may have a paper of sandwiches and a bottle of sherry, usquebaugh, curaçao, anything you like at your elbow, if you have a mind. A thousand delightful little varieties are continually occurring.—If the chatty old lady leaves you, the blooming damsel takes her place the next stage. There is always some one, either to laugh *with* or *at*; and in spite of all that has been said by Laureate Espriella, and other superfine Dons, you have excellent meals three times a-day, and snowy sheets every night. Unless a man is travelling with a Challenge, or a Licence, or something of that sort in his pocket, I have no notion of his being unhappy in an English mail-coach. We, for one, never hear the horn blowing without envying those that are setting out—above all those that are starting, like our friend Reginald, for the first time.

I have mentioned a panorama already, I meant one of the revolving kind, and I can find no image that will so well illustrate the rapidity and variety of his new impressions during this career. The Irishwoman to whom we have been introduced, was journeying with a small cargo of smuggled India handkerchiefs (the bloody one a specimen), and she stopped at Manchester, after having disposed of her whole stock between her junior companions. But Mr. Ralph Macdonald, W.S., was not so soon to be got rid of: Every town they came to they expected to lose sight of him, but no; although he said nothing of his plans overnight, he was always sure to start again in the same vehicle the next morning; and when he supped at Birmingham, he was the first to remark that Oxford would be their next supping place. To say the truth, even Frederick Chisney had contracted something that might almost be called a fondness for the old gentleman ere then; for though all the prejudices of the Scotchman were pitched on keys utterly and horribly at discordance from his own, there was an air of quaint and barbarous and foreign novelty, about the style in which he expressed his opinions, quite sufficient to ensure the tolerance of so light-headed and light-hearted an antagonist. Besides, it must not be forgotten that Ralph was somewhat an humourist in his style; and then, though he was a Whig, he was not a very bad specimen, apparently; at all events, no man ever testified more withering indignation than he did, when, on having casually announced himself to be *a writer in Edinburgh*, he found that his youthful and shuddering associates imagined this to be the same thing with *a writer in the Edinburgh Review*.

But Saunders was only one feature in the picture—and what a strange motley picture it was! First of all there was the country. Never had Reginald opened his eyes on that richest—and perhaps grandest, too—of all earthly prospects, a mighty English plain, until he saw it in all its perfection from the Hill of Haynam, that spot where Charles Edward, according to the local tradition, stood rooted below a sycamore, and gazing with a fervour of admiration which even rising despair could not check, uttered the pathetic exclamation,—"Alas! this is England." The boundless spread of beauty and of grandeur—for even hedges and hedgerows are woven by distance into the semblance of one vast wood—the apparent ease—the wealth—the splendour—the limitless magnificence—the minute elaborate comfort—the picturesque villages—the busy towns—the embosomed spires—the stately halls—the ancestral groves—everything, the assemblage of which stamps "England herself alone"—they all lay before him, and there needed no "Alas," to preface his confession.—But as to the particulars, are

they not written in John Britton, F.A.S.?—And who is it that has not seen all that Reginald saw, just as well as he? Who is not acquainted with the snug unpretending little inns, with their neatly-papered parlours, and prints of Hambletonian and Lord Granby, and handy waiters, and neat-fingered waiting-maids, and smiling landladies, and bowing landlords, and good dinners smoking in sight of the stopping coach? and the large noisy bustling inns, with travellers' rooms full of saddle-bags and dread-noughts, and tobacco smoke and Welsh rabbits, enormous hams, and jugs of porter, and stained newspapers, and dog-eared Directories, and chattering, joking, waiter-awing bagmen, and civil contemplative Quakers,

> "Some sipping punch, some sipping tea,
> All silent, and all———"?

and the charming airy country towns "near a shady grove and a murmuring brook," with cleanly young girls seen over the Venetian blinds, in the act of rubbing comfortable old fellows' bald pates—and other comfortable old fellows just mounting their easy pad-nags to ride out a mile—and other cleanly young girls laying the table-cloth for "roast mutton rather than ven'son or teal?"—and the filthy large towns, with manufactories and steam-engines, and crowded sloppy streets, and doctors' bottles, "green and blue," in the windows?—and the stately little cities, with the stately little parsons walking about them, two or three abreast, in well-polished shoes, and blameless silk aprons some of them, and grand old churches, and spacious well-built *closes*, and trim gardens, and literary spinsters?—We have all of us seen these things—and they are all of them good in their several ways. We have all been at such places as Preston, and Manchester, and Birmingham, and Litchfield. We have all seen statesman Brougham's paddock, and listened to

> "Long-Preston Peggy to Proud-Preston went,
> For to see the bould rebels it was her intent."

We have all heard of Whitaker's History, and the late Dr. Ferrier, and the Literary and Philosophical Society of the "Mancunian Mart." We have all admired Soho, and pin-making, and Chantry's bust of James Watt. We have all heard of Anna Seward, and sighed over her lines on the death of Major André; and sympathised with the indignation of Richard Lovell Edgeworth, Esq. at the "damned good-natured friend," who asked across the table for Mrs. Edgeworth and the babies, just when he and Anna were opening the trenches of their flirtation. And we have all seen the house where Samuel Johnson's father sold books; and many of us have (like Reginald) walked half-a-mile farther, on purpose to see the willow which "Surly Sam" himself planted in Tetsy's daughter's garden. And we have all been at Stratford-upon-Avon, and written our names in black lead upon the wall, and heard that old body that says she is Shakespeare's great-great-great-great-great-great-grand-niece-in-law, spout the opening scene of her "WATERLOO, A TRAGEDY."

> "Dear Captain Brown, the postman has been here
> And you look sad———
> Now, marry, say not so;
> But the regiment has at last received its orders,
> And I must take my seat for the Isle o Wight.
> Farewell, farewell, dear Kate," &c. &c.

If you have ever happened to travel that road about the end of October, you have probably seen a great deal even of the more transitory and occasional sort of things that fell under the inspection of Reginald and his companions. You have probably observed abundance of rosy-cheeked old Staffordshire parsons, in grey-worsted stockings, seeing their sons into the Oxford-bound coach, just below the rectory ha-ha. You have been annoyed with the troops of empty, talking, consequential, beardless "men," chattering to each other about "First Class" and "Second Class"—Sir Roger Newdigate's prize-poem—the Dean of Christchurch—Coplestone's pamphlets—and the Brazen-nose Eight-oar. You have been amused with the snug tutors, in tight stocking pantaloons and gaiters, endeavouring to show how completely they can be easy, well-bred, well-informed men of the world, when they have not their masters' gowns upon their backs—hazarding a jocular remark, perhaps, even to an undergraduate the one moment, and biting their lips and drawing themselves up the moment after. You have been distressed with their involuntary quotations from Joe Miller and the Quarterly Review; and if you have taken a second "cheerer" with them after supper, you may have been regaled with some classical song out of The Sausage—"the swapping, swapping Mallard"—or,

> "Your voices, brave boys, one and all I bespeak em,
> In due celebration of William of Wickham;
> Let our chorus maintain, whether sober or mellow,
> That old Billy Wickham was a very fine fellow," &c.

You have not, indeed, it is most probable, enjoyed the advantage of hearing and seeing all these fine things in company with a sturdy Presbyterian Whig, grinning one grim and ghastly smile all the time, reviling all things, despising all things, and puffing himself up with all things; but, nevertheless, you would in all likelihood think a fuller description no better than a bore.

Chisney, as was very much his custom, took an outside place for the journey between Birmingham and Oxford; and there was nobody within the vehicle, which happened to be the heavy Shrewsbury, but Reginald, Mr. Macdonald, and an old Shropshire gentleman who was carrying his son to College. This gentleman was possessed of very mild and engaging manners, and perceiving that Reginald was, like his own youth, a *Freshman*,

he naturally was disposed to treat him with something like a sort of paternal kindness and attention. The Scotchman, on his part, was in an uncommonly placid frame of mind that day ; and altogether the *partie quarrée* passed their time very agreeably in the coach.

While it stopped to change horses at Woodstock, Chisney, running into The Bear for a glass of something, or perhaps a chat with the barmaid, found a whole knot of his Oxonian acquaintances making merry. These young bucks having come up from their counties a day before the beginning of the term, had been amusing themselves with a ride through the Duke's Park at Blenheim, and a dinner in the adjoining town had, of course, been the consequence. Chisney, after speaking with some of them for a minute, came down and asked Reginald, if he would excuse him for leaving him. "You will be the fresher man to-morrow," quoth he, "for having gone early to bed. Take care of my luggage, and I'll be with you ere you've done breakfast in the morning."

Reginald of course made no opposition to all this. The Shropshire gentleman (who was, as it had peeped out, an old militaire) remarked, when he heard the clamour of the young men, that they were making a jolly mess of it for once. Macdonald, with a more than sardonic grin, thrust his head out of the coach, aud squinting up to the lighted windows of the inn, exclaimed, "Od, but the young chields are birling their bawbees at a gay rate the night. My certy, some of the puir paurents have but little guess how their siller's going." But the conversation ere long took another turn, and indeed Reginald had but little share in it, whatever it was ; for the last stage is always an endless one to appearance, and the boy could scarcely remain three minutes on end, without looking out to see whether the "glittering spires and pinnacles," of which he had heard and read so largely, were not yet coming to view.

The moon had just risen in splendour :—but the country is very flat on that side of Oxford, and at the distance of less than a mile, Reginald could still see nothing but trees—or towers, which, under such circumstances, it was impossible to distinguish from them. All of a sudden—just when expectation was on the utmost stretch—just when such an accident was more disagreeable than it ever could have been before—a spring gave way, and down came Shrewsbury.

Had the gentlemen been aware how near Oxford was, they would certainly have preferred walking the remainder of the way ; but the coachman, anxious of course to prevent his passengers from outstripping him, and thereby giving additional blazon to the misfortune, swore the distance was three times what it really amounted to. A peal of laughter fell on their ears just while they were hesitating—and John carried his point more easily than he might otherwise have succeeded in doing, when he had made known the immediate neighbourhood of a house of entertainment.

His halloo was speedily answered from behind the trees that skirted that side of the highway, and the coach was soon surrounded by some half-dozen men, women, and children. At the head of them figured a stout portly old fellow, with a well-powdered beaver in one hand, and a tallow-candle blazing in the other, who seemed to order all the rest about with an air of so much authority, that Major Harvey (for that was the Shropshireman's name) set him down, in spite of his handsome black suit, for the Boniface of the place. This notion, however, did not last long, for another of the party, one of a very different sort of aspect, announced himself *in terminis* as landlord, requesting the gentlemen to enter his house, and rest themselves there until the mishap could be properly looked into. The person who uttered the invitation was a pale, stooping, hatchet-faced body, exceedingly frail and tremulous, and yet somehow or other not old-looking neither ; but a single glassy sparkle of joviality still lingering unextinguished in his eye, might perhaps furnish some explanation of this apparent contradiction.

These and the others, who seemed from their habiliments to be common hinds and labourers, or at the best, small farmers, escorted the Major, his son, and Reginald, into a very small hamlet (but indeed it scarcely merited the name), the entrance to which branched off from the highway but a few paces beyond the spot where the accident had occurred. The smith being summoned, declared that in the course of ten minutes he could make the coach fit for finishing its journey ; and until this should be accomplished, our friends were fain to accept the shelter offered by the officious lord of the rural hospitium.

The house into which he ushered them is a little crazy tenement, which, though not seldom frequented by very fine gentlemen, preserves uninjured and undisguised all its original features of rudeness and rusticity. The gay young fellows of the neighbouring university escape occasionally with gladness from the splendid formalities of their halls, to the simple cheer afforded under such humble roofs, to

> "Quaff home-brew'd beer from plain brown bowls,
> And snatch the savoury rasher from the coals."

A cheerful fire, then, was roaring up a black, wide-mouthed chimney, in the midst of a spacious circle occupied by stout oaken benches. Pots and flagons of every shape and hue, and pipes of every length and every shade, were scattered within the full influence of the blazing hearth—while, an opposite door being open, the softer light of a fine October moon showed the bright turf of a skittle-green,

and the chequering shadows of the willow bowers with which its verge was surrounded.

Here the Major (for canny St. Andrews had stayed without to look after the repairs) took his place without delay close by the fire, in an enormous old chair, each leg of which might be as thick as any modern bed-post. The landlord, without waiting for an order, produced a bottle of excellent cider, which he drew with some little difficulty, and then placed it on a small table by the left elbow of his senior guest. The portly person, of whom mention has already been made, arranged himself meanwhile very comfortably on the opposite side of the chimney, put fresh tobacco into his pipe, and began to puff in that slow deliberate style, which is so characteristic of your old and knowing smoker. The Major, whose cigar was already between his lips, did not fail to recognise in the stranger a genuiue brother of the tube, and immediately began to address him in that tone of suavity, which is prompted by, and which so well becomes, the most benign and philosophical of all debauches.

"May I be bold enough,' said he, "to ask if I have the honour to be in the company of an Oxonian?—I need scarcely ask the question."

The person to whom these words were addressed, rolled out a cloud of smoke which it must have taken at least a minute to accumulate within his mouth. Quietly and composedly did he send forth the fragrant vapour, and not until its last white trail had escaped into the upper air did he vouchsafe his answer, which was as follows :—

"I crave your pardon, sir, but I thought at first you were an old son of Alma Mater yourself, sir ; but it can't be so, sir—forgive my freedom, sir, for there's never a man, sir, has smoked a pipe within a mile of Carfax these forty years, sir, that doesn't know Jem Brank, sir. Did your honour ever hear of old Jem Brank?"

The Major, without taken the cigar from between his lips, signified by a shake negative his total ignorance of Mr. Brank.

Jem, in the mean time, had sucked in another vast treasure of smoke, which, unlike himself, he got rid of by means of three or four hasty jerks, and then resumed—

"Your honour, then, was a Cantab?"

"Not at all," quoth the Major, smiling ; "you college folks think all the world must have been at college. I never was either in Oxford or Cambridge in my life."

Mr. Brank blew three or four clouds more, looked first at his own leg, then at the Major's, and said, "Crave your pardon, sir, but I thought your honour seemed to tread a little tenderly."

The Major smiled more pleasantly than before, and knocking off the long grey tail of his cigar against the edge of the elbow-chair, said, "Yes, my good friend ; and yet, however odd it may seem to you, I never had a single touch of gout since I was born."

"O dear!" quoth Jem, "I fear me your honour has had some bad accident, sir—Was it a hedge and a double-ditch, sir?—I think, for one, that no gentleman should suffer such a thing on his estate, sir."

The Major laid his left hand gently upon his knee, pronounced the words, "Only Bunker's-hill, Mr. Brank," and resumed his cigar. He added, however, after a slight pause—"I am so far on my way to Oxford, to enter my son at * * * college ; and here is another young gentleman, who does not know what college he is to be of."

Mr. Brank rose from his chair as if instinctively, on hearing this last sentence, and making a low bow to the Major, said, "Crave your honour's pardon for my freedom, sir, but I am the Barber of * * * * (my mother was the laundress, sir, and my grandfather was head butler) ; and I hope my young master will be Jem Brank's customer, sir. Excuse my freedom, your honour, but our trade's not what it used to be—and besides, it's a shame to hear of it, sir—they've divided the office, sir."

"They've divided a sinecure, my friend," said the Major, laughing, "that is, if all your customers be like this. My boy has not a beard yet!"

"A beard! Lord bless your honour, I was not expecting a beard ; but my master can't go to hall without his hair being turned."

"Well, well, Mr. Brank, if his hair must be turned, I hope you'll take care not to turn his head along with it."

"Many thanks to your honour's kindness—I have the honour to drink your honour and my young master's health," said Jem, lifting his tankard to his lips. He set it down, after taking what seemed to be no trivial pull, and then re-seated himself, having edged off his chair, however, to a more respectful distance from the chimney.

"Dr. Kennett is your head," quoth the Major, "but I am not acquainted with the names of any of the fellows. Who are the leading resident members of your college, Mr. Brank?"

"O, there's Mr. Ainsworth, an please your honour, he's the chief manager now-a-days that the Provost is rather failing, and he tutors most of the young gentlemen ; and there's Mr. Leedes, a very fine man, he tutors a few too—I always dress Mr. Leedes—he's said to be a main strong'un in the mathematical department, sir ; and there's a young man, lately elected, Mr. Valpy ; and there's the senior fellow, sir, Mr. Burton (here Jem's voice fell two or three notes), who, if they say true, is the most learned man in all our college, but he lives retired, sir—takes no part in anything that goes on amongst us, sir, and has not, I believe, had a single pupil

these twelvemonths past. I only wait upon him on the Sundays."

"And why does Mr. Burton live so retiredly, if I may ask?"

"Lord love your honour, there's ne'er a one can answer that question that I knows of—a very strange gentleman is Mr. Burton."

"Well, but what is the common talk about him? A man can never act strangely without being strangely talked about."

"Why," quoth Jem (once more putting his pipe to his mouth, and at the same time drawing his chair somewhat nearer to the Major's),—"why, really, to tell the truth, your honour, we knows nothing of it for certain; but the general saying is, as how Mr. Burton was crossed in love, for he was once, well do I remember that, the very gayest gentleman in all St. John's, and he went abroad for a year or better, and he came back and stood for a fellowship in * * *; and he got it; for, as I was saying, there's none like him for learning, but from that day to this, he has been an altered man, sir. He's no more like the same Mr. Burton that he was a matter of twenty years ago, no more than I'm like the Dean of Christ-church."

"I never saw the Dean of Christ-church," said the Major; "but if you had been dressed in a cassock, Mr. Brank, I should certainly have taken you for a Prebendary, or a Doctor of Divinity at the least."

"O Lord, sir," whispered Jem, "if I may be so bold, sir, I hope your honour won't teach my young master to talk so lightly about such great folks. O Lord, sir, there's a proper old saying we have, 'hands off the bull-dogs, tongues off the caput."

Just as Brank was finishing the above cautionary sentence, the coachman came into the house, announcing the completion of the blacksmith's labours. The officious barber was most active in arranging the Major's travelling cloak. The Major, in return gave him half-a-crown to drink "Mr. Harvey's health:"—and the old Shrewsbury, in the course of another minute, was rolling once more smoothly and safely towards Oxford.

Although Reginald did not take any part in the foregoing colloquy, yet he was a good deal interested in the latter part of it; and indeed how could it be otherwise, since the only letter in his pocket-book was addressed to the gentleman whose singular habits of life had been the subject of discourse? This was no other than the old and only friend whom his father had supposed himself to possess in Oxford—this was the very Mr. Burton to whose care and superintendence he had furnished his son with the warmest of introductions and recommendations. However, he had scarcely mentioned this to Major Harvey, when at last the long-looked-for Dome of Ratcliffe appeared in view, and Reginald had eyes for nothing but the opening splendours of Rhedycina.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN AULD YET NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

"Tax not the prince or peer with vain expense,
With ill-match'd aims the architect—who plann'd
(Albeit labouring for a scanty band
Of white-robed scholars only) some immense
And glorious work of fine intelligence."

So says (*O! si sic omnia!*) a great living poet; and, in truth, a very prosaic animal must he be, who for the first time traverses that noble and ancient City of the Muses, without acknowledging the influences of the GENIUS LOCI; and never was man or youth less ambitious of resisting such influences than Reginald Dalton. Born and reared in a wild sequestered province, he had never seen any great town of any sort, until he began the journey now just about to be concluded. Almost at the same hour of the preceding evening, he had entered Birmingham; and what a contrast was here! No dark narrow brick lanes, crowded with waggons—no flaring shop-windows, passed and repassed by jostling multitudes—no discordant cries, no sights of tumult, no ring of anvils—everything wearing the impress of a grave, peaceful stateliness—hoary towers, antique battlements, airy porticos, majestic colonnades, following each other in endless succession on either side—lofty poplars and elms ever and anon lifting their heads against the sky, as if from the heart of those magnificent seclusions—wide, spacious, solemn streets—everywhere a monastic stillness and a Gothic grandeur.——Excepting now and then some solitary gowned man pacing slowly in the moonlight, there was not a soul in the High-street; nor, excepting here and there a lamp twinkling in "some high lonely tower," where some one might, or might not, be "unsphering the spirit of Plato," was there anything to show that the venerable buildings which lined it were actually inhabited.

Reginald, in the hurry at Woodstock, had forgot to say anything to Chisney about what inn he should put up at in Oxford, so he entered, along with Mr. Macdonald and the Harveys, the one where the coach stopped. It is one of the oldest in the town,—the same indeed, if tradition may be trusted, where erst the Swan of Avon used sometimes to roost, when Sir William D'Avenant's mother's husband was the innkeeper. Major Harvey complained of his leg a little, for it was a sharp frost, and he, with his son, retired almost immediately from the public-room. And Reginald, although his spirits were far too much excited for him to be thinking of weariness, was desirous to be early in his bed, that he might be able to rise early and walk about the city before breakfast; so he also, having swallowed a cup of coffee, was about to go up-stairs, but Macdonald arrested his steps.—"Hoots, hoots," quoth he; "this is no neighbourlike behaviour at all, man.

Dog on it, we've been three days companions, and now ye're at the end of your journey, and I'm off for Lunnun in the morning, and we'll maybe ne'er meet other again, man. Just sit your ways down, Mr. Dalton, for we maun have ae mair crack thegither ere we part." Reginald could not, of course, resist this invitation, and he instantly resumed his chair over against his Scottish friend. "By and by," said Macdonald, "I'm expectin' a very auld acquaintance o' mine that's in this town, to come and talk over a little business wi' me, but a very little time will be enough for all we've gotten to say as to that matter; and if he's no a changed man since I saw him last, he'll mak no mouths at a drap of something warm, this frosty night. Od, we'll have something comfortable for supper, and keep it up cheerily for ance, man." Reginald touched the bell, and the bill of fare being produced,—"Od, save us," quoth the Scot, "it's as weel I had mind of that, though. 'Tis Friday night, and we maun have a bit fried fish for Mr. Keith. Gae away, my lad," —addressing the waiter—"and ask if there's ne'er such a thing as a haddock or a whiting about the house, for we've gotten a Roman to supper wi' us."

"I'm quite sure," replied the waiter, "that there is not a single bit of fish, else it would have been in the fare."

"Ay," quoth Macdonald, "that's vera unlucky, man; but stop, here's snipes, I see, and they'll do weel eneugh at a pinch, for langnebbit water-fowl's nae flesh meat, I trow; and a marrow pudding's i' the bill, too. Od, ye may e'en send it ben for the remove; but be sure ye swear it's only eggs and butter, if there's ony questions speered. Gae your ways now, and see that 'tis a' right set about. Gae away, you lazy chield—tramp, I say. Od, ye stap about as grave like as if ye were some Principal yoursel, I think."

"A jolly-looking old fellow, Mr. Macdonald."

"Na, saw ye ever such a kyte, Mr. Dalton? Gude save us a'!—a waiter wi' a belly!—He's no fed on deaf nuts yon chiel, i'faith."

Mr. Macdonald now called for pen and ink, and having written and dispatched a very brief note, he again turned to Reginald. "You must know, my young friend," he said, "that 'tis not ony common sneak of a priest body I'm sending for. Mr. Keith's a gentleman born—no a man in braid Scotland come of a better family than he is.—Faith, if he hadna been a Roman priest, he would have been a very good laird this day."

"Don't suppose I have any prejudice against a Roman Catholic clergyman, merely because he is one," said Reginald. "My own mother, sir, was of that persuasion."

"Na, I ken naething about that, Mr. Dalton; but, my troth, though Archy Keith might have done a very gowk-like thing when he joined their cloth, it cannot be disputed that he has done a very genteel part by sticking to it—more genteel than sensible, to my thinking, but however.—Od, man, if he had only flung by his gown, he might have been Keith of Keithquhangs at this blessed hour; but be had ta'en the vows, ye see, and he wouldna hear a word about it, but just let his brither be the laird, and could be got to accept of nothing but a sma' bit matter of an annuity to himself."

"Very like a gentleman and a man of honour, indeed," said Reginald. "And now he is the Catholic priest here, I suppose."

"Ay, he's just come ower the sea to be at the head of a small Roman Catholic congregation here; but I assure ye 'tis a sair downcome for Mr. Keith. He had a very fine living in Germany, but now Buonaparte has dung him out, as he has mony a ane that's cheaper o't, in his time. But Archy Keith was aye a contented creature. I would not wonder if ye were to see him with just as blithe a face as if naething had happened till him."

"I shall be very happy, indeed, sir, to see so truly respectable a gentleman as your friend."

They might have been talking together in this sort of strain for rather more than half-an-hour, ere the waiter ushered in a little old man wrapt in a dark cloak, with a great deal of fur about it, who paused for a moment in the door-way, and then trotting up to Macdonald, shook him by both hands, and, raising himself on tiptoe, kissed first the one cheek and then the other. It was at first, "My dear Mr. Macdonald," and "My dear Mr. Keith;" but they were at "Hech, me!" and "Oh, Ralph, man!" ere they quitted hold of each other's hands.

After the first heat of their salutation was over, Mr. Macdonald introduced Reginald Dalton to his friend, and the old gentleman bowed himself half-a-dozen times, with an elaborate courtesy that rather disconcerted our home-bred youth. The two Scots then retired to the other end of the room, and laying their heads together over a side-table, conversed for some time in whispers. Reginald was too well-bred to look in that direction, but he saw, in the course of one or two involuntary glances, that some papers were exchanged between them; and he rather thought several bank-notes were, *inter alia*, handed to the priest by the Presbyterian.

However, it was not long ere they both came back to the fire-side. Mr. Keith, throwing off his formidable cloak, exhibited a suit of black, and a pair of tall dragoon boots, both of these too clumsily fashioned to be suspected for English manufacture. He wore a brown periwig, curled all over in straight lines, which also had an outlandish aspect; and he drew from the side-pocket of his mantle, ere he laid it away from him, a

long and massy tobacco-pipe, the silk-wrapt stalk and silver chain-work of which were exposed to view, while its fine Meerschaum head remained closely swathed in a bag of crimson leather. But although the good man had begun to produce the picker, the flint, and all his subsidiary smoking-tackle, he laid them aside with an air of great resignation, when the waiter came into the room with his tray, "dispensing odorous sweets;"—and both the snipes and the marrow pudding met with a most orthodox degree of attention at his hands. The cloth being removed, and the decanters substituted, Mr. Keith composed a jolly mixture of toddy, which he called *ein treffliches ponch*, fired his picturesque tube, and talked gaily about Old Scotland, and dear Germany, his second "fatherland," between the rolling puffs.

"My certy, Archy Keith," quoth Macdonald, "but you must have had a proper run for it. By Jove, it was a lucky chance that brought the flying Brunswickers in your way, my boy."

"Flying Brunswickers!" quoth he, discharging a treble vapour; "I promise you they had but little the look of flying, notwithstanding. Our French lads crackit crously enow, I warrant ye, and they had all their guns upon the brigg too, and everything looked like a brave siege, at the least penny. But, 'faith, sir, the first Brunswick Schako shook their mettle for them, and all our swashing custom-house billies took to their heels; and the soldiers, there was a matter of six hundred, laid down their guns in the market, though there were but some hundred and fifty, and a couple of six-pounders, to guard both them and the town when it was done."

"What town was this, man?" quoth Macdonald.

"Bremen, to be sure. Did not I tell you it was from thence we made our escape?"

"Indeed, but you did no such things, Mr. Keith; I thought you said it was Leipsick you took to after your misfortunes."

"Misfortune! pooh, pooh! We'se not call it by a hard name that has brought us home once more; for after a', Ralph Macdonald, home's home, and I reckon myself at home when I'm in Britain—indeed I do."

"To be sure you do," cried Macdonald; "d—— it, man, can a man be the less a Briton, because he happens to have been born of one religion or another?"

"I don't speak," cried Mr. Keith, "of being *born* this or that, Mr. Macdonald; but can a man be the less a Briton, sir, because he be in heart and in sincerity of the religion of the Alfreds, the Bruces, the Wallaces, the Mores?—or if you speak of poets, sir, what, after all, have ye to set against the Popes, the Drydens, ay, and the Shakespeares?"

"I beg your pardon," said Reginald, "but indeed, sir, I never before heard that Shakespeare was a Catholic."

"Perhaps not," said the priest, gradually rising out of his usual quiet tone; "but do only think of it, sir. Shakespeare lived under Elizabeth and James I.; he lived when the prejudices against the Catholics were at their first and most furious heat; he lived when the stage was a court amusement, in a higher and truer sense than it has ever since been; he lived when literature was, comparatively speaking, a guileless, artless thing, when men spoke in their works what they thought and felt in their own heads and hearts, sir; above all, he was SHAKESPEARE, and yet where, in all his writings, do ye find a single sarcasm against the old Faith? Had Shakespeare lived *now*, and been a Tory or a Whig, do ye suppose he could have helped abusing, in some way or other, them that belonged to the party opposite to his? No, no, sir, you find no cunning crafty confessors, no infidel monks, no lascivious nuns, in his writings; on the contrary, you find him daring to exhibit these characters under the best possible point of view—uniformly so—and this in the very face of the feelings and prejudices—the most violent feelings, and the most violent prejudices—of the audiences on whose breath his existence depended—and do you, after all this, doubt that Shakespeare was a Catholic at heart? or, believing that he was such, do you, does any man, dare to say, that ours is an un-English Faith?"

Mr. Macdonald coughed and nodded to Reginald once or twice during this dissertation, as if to caution him against saying anything that might tend to prolong the discussion—and indeed the youth himself was sufficiently unwilling to do so, seeing, as he did, how the old gentleman's face had flushed, and all the light gaiety of his previous manner been lost, in consequence of the broaching of these too interesting topics. But the moment Mr. Keith paused in his strain, his countryman broke in with "Ye've letten a' the tobacco drap out of your pipe, man; fill your tumbler again; wha cares a fiddler's d—— what profession a playactoring chield like Shakespeare made? Fill up your glass again, I say, and let's hear how you and the young leddy won away frae the French in the hinderend."

With a placid smile the old man did as he was bid as to the tumbler; and, relighting his pipe at the same time, came back to his campaign quite in his customary soft and agreeable tone of voice. "If it had been only myself," said he, "ye ken weel, Ralph Macdonald, I had seen the like before, and could have borne't all without mickle gruing."

"Ah! plague on you, I'se warrant ye thought the forty-five was come back again; but your shanks were suppler then, I'm thinking, my friend."

"Troth, Ralph, but they served me in decent stead, nevertheless, man. At first, to

be sure, we had only one horse between us, and my poor lassie, nothing could persuade her but she must walk, and I ride. I took her up behint me, to be sure, but then the beast flung and capered like mad ; and though I got her to mount now and then afterwards, it was never ten minutes till down she lap again, and would have me up right or wrong. To say the truth, I had had a very bad fever and cold, and was but weakly at the time."

"What a sair turn for the puir lassie!" said Macdonald :—at the same time he whispered to Reginald, "'Tis Mr. Keith's niece he's speaking o'—She's come over wi' him from Germany in the midst of all these troubles, ye see."

"Troubles! houts, houts! we aye keepit up our hearts weel enough, an' be not when we came to the waterside, the Linda they call it, and found there was never a boat to be had for love or money, every stick burnt and riven by that tinkler chield Rewbell—and nothing for it but the swimming. God safe us! I thought at the first glimpse o't, that all was over wi' poor Ellen and me ; for what kind of a hand could an old man like me, or a bit delicate thing like Ellen, make of swimming such a broad water in the midst of a hundred and fifty tramping soldiers, wi' wives and bairns, and bag and baggage, and Rewbell at our very heels? However, God be thanked, the commander persuaded his men to leave everything behind them ; and a canny chiel of a hussar clinkit up Ellen behint him before we could say Jack Robinson, and I spurred my beast, and in we plunged. Sore work it was, sirs, but we got well through at the upshot, with no greater damage than a good ducking ; for as to me, the water rose far o'er the saddle ; and Ellen, when she came ashore, was as druckit as a water-wagtail. We had no time to think o' these matters, though. On we behoved to tramp, and we got all to the Duke's quarters about two in the morning. But, 'faith, it would have done your heart good, to see how she endured it all ; never blenching a cheek, nor making a single complaint ; but running hither and thither to get what she could for me, that could do little or nothing for myself, the cold water had made me so rheumatical about the legs."

"A fine-spirited lass indeed," quoth Macdonald.

"A noble young lady truly," cried Reginald Dalton.

"Ye may say all that," quoth the old gentleman quietly, yet fervently—"But, God bless us! we had worse before us, though we thought all our troubles had been over, in a manner, when we were beside the Duke."

"He had hot wark to win away, the papers said," quoth Macdonald.

"Hot work, and cold work too," said the Priest ; "and I promise ye we had our share of both ; but all's well that ends well ; here we are, safe and sound, in merry England!"

"*Merry* England, forsooth!" said Macdonald ; "a pretty sort of merriment, my certy!—But get on, man, let's hear the upshot."

"Why, you see, we were laid, little Ellen and I, in a queer out-of-the-way nook, far ben in one of their great Bauer's houses, where there's cattle, and poultry, and men, women, and bairns, all stowed away at night, beneath the same roof ; a place as big as one of your *kirks* in Scotland, or an honest man's barn in merry England, or dull England, if you will have it so. There we lay, wrapt up, as best we might be, with an old cloak or two hung up between us and the crowding and racket that was in the place ; for I believe there were a couple o' score of soldiers all snoring upon the floor, as well as we : and, to be sure, we had both had weariness enow; and we slept as soundly, sirs, as if we had been in our beds."

"Faith," quoth Macdonald, "ye were aye a braw sleeper ; I'se say that for you, Maister Keith."

"To be sure I was ; and I hope I shall be so for some time yet ; and then there will be no fear about sleep enow, my friend ; but, as ill luck would have it, the alarm was given—very quietly you may suppose—about half past four o'clock, and the soldiers trooped away as lightly as they could, and little Ellen and I were clean forgotten ; and, after all, what can one say, they were in such a hurry and bustle. They had been every soul of them out of the Dorf for half an hour, or near hand it, ere the old Bauer's wife, redding up her odds and ends a little, found us sleeping in our bit corner. The good body raised us with a thumping shake, I warrant ye ; and up we got, and soon found what had happened. However, the old Frau was a mettlesome body, and she swore we might overtake them yet, ere the sea came in. For you must know, the Duke had heard of the English ships being off the headland about five miles below, and the great matter was to get there by crossing the bay—which is a great waste of sands when the tide's out, and the sea itself, when 'tis in. When we got down to the shore, there was a mist upon the sands, but we could see the hindmost of the Brunswickers. I take it they might be the best part of a mile before us. What was to be done? If we stayed where we were, we must of course fall into Rewbell's mouth, and what could we expect but to be sent away into some French prison, for there were plenty o' people that could have recognised us at Bremen ; and there could have been no denying that we had tried to get off alongst with the Brunswickers. If we ventured on, it was a bold venture, but Ellen was the first to say that we had much better try it ; and, faith, my heart was up too ; and when the kind-

hearted old Frau offered to give us her knecht and a couple of horses to go over to the headland with us, there was no more word of disputing—we buckled up our alls; that was soon done, I trow;—and so we took the sand gaily, Ellen cantering her beast at my side, as lightly as if she had been riding at a *broose*."

"I take it, sir," interrupted Reginald, "that these sands are much like some I came over the other day, on my way from Furness to Lancaster."

"Like enough," quoth he; "like enough, it may be so; and, I promise ye, I shall be in no hurry to ride that journey, if they have the same look with them, my young gentleman."

"Get on, get on, man," roared Macdonald.

"Well, sir, we did get on," he proceeded; "and we got on bravely and gaily too, for a time, till all at once, sirs, the Bauer-knecht, that rode before us, halted. The mist, you will observe, had been clearing away pretty quickly on the right hand, but it was dark enough towards the front, and getting darker and darker; but we thought nought on't till the boy pulled up. 'Meinherr, Meinherr!' cried the fellow, 'I am afraid I hear the water.' He stopt for a moment, and then said, 'Stay you for a moment where you are, and I'll soon see whether we are right.' With that, off he went, as if the devil was at his tail; and we, what could we do—we stood like two stocks—and poor little Ellen, she looked into my face so woefully, that I wished to God we were both safe in the blackest hole of Bieche. In short, I suppose he had not galloped half a bow-shot, ere we quite lost sight of the fellow, but for several minutes more we could hear his horse's hoofs on the wet sand. We lost that too—and then, sirs, there came another sound, but what it was we could not at first bring ourselves to understand. Ellen stared me in the face again, with a blank look, you may swear; and, 'Good God!' said she at last, 'I am certain it's the sea, uncle!'—'No, no!' said I, 'Listen, listen! I'm sure you are deceived.' She looked and listened, and so did I, sirs, keenly enough; and, in a moment, there came a strong breath of wind, and away went the mist driving, and we heard the regular heaving and rushing of the waters. 'Ride, ride, my dear uncle,' cried Ellen, 'or we are lost;' and off we both went, galloping as hard as we could away from the waves. My horse was rather the stronger one of the pair, but at length he began to pant below me, and just then the mist dropt down again thicker and thicker right and left, and I pulled up in a new terror, lest we should be separated; but Ellen was alongside in a moment, and, faith, however it was, she had more calmness with her than I could muster. She put out her hand, poor girl, and grasped mine, and there we remained for, I dare say, two or three minutes, our horses, both of them, quite blown, and we knowing no more than the man in the moon where we were, either by the village or our headland."

The old gentleman paused for a moment, and then went on in a much lower tone—"I feel it all as if it were *now*, sirs; I was like a man bewildered in a dream. I have some dim sort of remembrance of my beast pawing and plashing with his fore feet, and looking down and seeing some great slimy eels—never were such loathsome wretches—twisting and twirling on the sand, which, by the way, was more water than sand ere that time. I also recollect a screaming in the air, and then a flapping of wings close to my ear almost, and then a great cloud of the sea-mews driving over us away into the heart of the mist. Neither of us said anything, but we just began to ride on again, though, God knows, we knew nothing of whither we were going; but we still kept hand in hand. We rode a good space, till that way also we found ourselves getting upon the sea; and so round and round, till we were at last convinced the water had completely hemmed us all about. There were the waves trampling, trampling towards us, whichever way we turned our horses' heads, and the mist was all this while thickening more and more; and if a great cloud of it was dashed away now and then with the wind, why, sirs, the prospect was but the more rueful, for the sea was round us every way. Wide and far we could see nothing but the black water, and the waves leaping up here and there upon the sand-banks.

"Well, sir, the poor dumb horses, they backed of themselves as the waters came gushing towards us. Looking round, snorting, snuffing, and pricking their ears, the poor things seemed to be as sensible as ourselves to the sort of condition we were all in; and while Ellen's hand wrung mine more and more closely, they also, one would have thought, were always shrinking nearer and nearer to each other, just as they had had the same kind of feelings. Ellen, I cannot tell you what her behaviour was. I don't believe there's a bold man in Europe would have behaved so well, sirs. Her cheek was white enough, and her lips were as white as if they had never had a drop of blood in them; but her eye, God bless me! after the first two or three minutes were over, it was as clear as the bonniest blue sky ye ever looked upon. I, for my part, I cannot help saying it, was, after a little while, more grieved, far more, about her than myself. I am an old man, sirs, and what did it signify? but to see her at blithe seventeen — But, however, why should I make many words about all that? I screamed, and screamed, and better screamed, but she only squeezed my hand, and shook her head, as if it was all of no avail. I had shouted till I was as hoarse as a raven,

and was just going to give up all farther thoughts of making any exertion; for, in truth, I began to feel benumbed and listless all over, my friends—when we heard a gun fired. We heard it quite distinctly, though the mist was so thick that we could see nothing. I cried then; you may suppose how I cried; and Ellen too, though she had never opened her lips before, cried as lustily as she could. Again the gun was fired, and again we answered at the top of our voices; and then, God bless me!—was there ever such a moment? We heard the dashing of the oars, and a strong breeze lifted the mist like a curtain from before us, and there was a boat—a jolly ten-oar boat, sheering right through the waters towards us, perhaps about a couple of hundred yards off. A sailor on the bow hailed and cheered us; but you may imagine how far gone we were when I tell you that I scarcely took notice it was in ENGLISH the man cried to us.

"In five minutes we were safe on board. They were kind, as kind as could be—good jolly English boys, every soul of them. Our poor lad was sitting in the midst of them with a brandy bottle at his head; and, poor soul, he had need enough of comfort, to be sure, for to Heligoland he must go—and three horses lost, of course—besides the anxiety of his friends.

"It was a good while ere I got my thoughts anyways collected about me. Ellen, poor thing, sat close nestled beside me, shaking all over like a leaf. But yet it was she that first spoke to me, and, upon my soul, I think her face was more woeful than it had ever been when we were in our utmost peril; it was a sore sight truly, that had made it so, and the poor lassie's heart was visibly at the bursting. There were our two horses—the poor dumb beasts—what think ye of it?—there they were, both of them, swimming just by the stern of the boat. And our honest Bauer, God bless me! the tears were running over his face while he looked at them; and by and by one of the poor creatures made an exertion and came off the side of the boat where the lad sat, quite close to ourselves, with an imploring look and a whining cry that cut me to the very heart. Ellen sat and sobbed by me, but every now and then she bolted up, and it was all I could do to hold her in her place. At last the poor beast made two or three most violent plunges, and reared himself half-way out of the water, coming so near the boat, that one of the men's oars struck him on the head; and with that he groaned most pitifully, snorted, neighed, and plunged again for a moment, and then there was one loud, shrill cry, I never heard such a terrible sound since I was born, and away he drifted a-stern of us.—We saw him after a very little while had passed, going quite passively the way the current was running, the other had done so just before; but I've been telling you a very long story, and perhaps you'll think about very little matters too. As for ourselves, we soon reached one of the transports that Sir George Steuart had sent to fetch off the brave Brunswickers; and though the rascally Danes kept firing at us in a most cowardly manner, whenever we were obliged to come near their side on the tack, they were such miserable hands at their guns, that not one shot ever came within fifty yards of one vessel that was there. It would have been an easy matter to have burnt Bremerlee about their ears, but the Duke was anxious to have his poor fellows in their quarters—God knows, they had had a sore campaign one way and another—and so we only gave them a few shots, just to see them skipping about upon the sand, and so passed them all, and got safe out of the Weser. We reached Heligoland next day, and then, you know, we were at home among plenty of English, and Ellen nursed my rheumatics; and as soon as I was able to move, we came over in one of the King's packets, and here we are, alive and kicking—I will say it once more—in *merry England*."

"Well, well, man," said Macdonald, "ye've had a perilous journey, and you may e'en take things your own way, if it must be so; but what, I pray you, has made you change your tune so? Sure you used to be a railer, and a bitter one too, or I'm much mistaken."

"Ay, Ralph," quoth the old gentleman; "and I might rail still, sir, if I were in a railing humour. But I've lived to see changes that may well shut my mouth:—I mind the day, sir,"—he proceeded, lifting his voice—"I well mind the day, sir, when a Catholic gentleman could neither inherit the estate of his ancestors without some beggarly quirk to evade the laws, nor buy lands, nor leave them to his bairns—I weel mind the day, sir, when the Honourable James Talbot was tried in an English court, tried like a felon, for being in Catholic orders—I mind good worthy Mr. Malony being tried in the same way, and sentenced to perpetual imprisonment, because he pleaded *guilty*, forsooth. These days are all gone past, Mr. Macdonald; King George, though I bore arms myself, when I was a beardless lad, against his grandfather, is a good man, and a good king, sir, and the prejudices of people must just get time to wear out. I shall not live to see the day—that I can scarcely expect—but come it will, and you, Mr. Dalton, I hope, will live to see it, when it will be no blot on any man's escutcheon to be a Petre, a Jerningham, a Throgmorton, or a Clifford."

"You need not be in such a heat, man," quoth Macdonald; "I'm sure I'm none o' the enemies of your claims, as ye call them. For my part, I think the Church of Rome and the Church of England are sib to the back-bone—four pennies the one, and a groat the other."

"Ay, ay, have I gotten ye there at last, ye foul Whig loon?" cried Keith, throwing himself back in his chair with a scornful smile; "Have I brought ye to the sticking-place at length, my friend? It is such friendship as yours, sir, that disgraces us now, and does more harm to the cause than all the open enemies we ever mustered. You hate EPISCOPACY, sir; you hate THE CHURCH; you are a vile WHIG, it was born in you, and bred in you, and it will rot in your bones, man. It's just you, and the like o' you, being with us, that makes those that should be with us stand against us; and if there's too many of ourselves that are taken in wi' your vile snares, so much the worse. Shame! Shame! and a black shame on all such tod's tricks, I say. NON TALI AUXILIO, NON DEFENSORIBUS ISTIS!"

"Hear till him, hear till him, Mr. Dalton! Wha saw ever sic a bleeze?"

But the jarring string had been touched, and the old man had risen and flung his mighty cloak about his shoulders ere Macdonald could find means to pacify him. He walked to the door in high dudgeon, but turned again just after he had laid his fingers on the lock, and resuming all the suavity of his usual smile, which was in truth a most mild and gracious one, said, "We must not part in ill blood, though, for all this, Ralph Macdonald. Here's my hand—God bless you—gie my love to all friends in the Land o' Cakes—that will be no great trouble to you now-a-days, man."

They shook hands, whispered together for a little while at the door of the room, and then, after wishing Reginald good-night, in a tone of great courtesy, and adding, that, as he was about to be a resident in Oxford, he hoped to have the pleasure of meeting with him again, the good priest withdrew.

Macdonald, drawing his chair close to the fire-place, entertained Reginald with a few moments' conversation about the old father and his adventurous expedition; and then these two coach acquaintances exchanged a tolerably affectionate farewell. Mr. Macdonald was to set off at seven next morning *per* Bobart, so that they had but little prospect of seeing each other again.

CHAPTER XVII.

GOWN *versus* TOWN.

THE bed-room, to which Betty Chambermaid conducted our young gentleman, was in a part of the house very remote from their supper-parlour. It is one of a great number situated along the line of an open wooden gallery, and its windows look out upon a lane branching from the street that gives entrance to the inn. Reginald, seeing that there was still fine moonlight, went to the window to peep out for a moment, ere he should undress himself. He threw up the sash, and was leaning over the balcony, contemplating a noble Gothic archway on the other side of the lane, when several persons turned the corner from the street, some retreating, apparently, and others following; for, though none of them were moving at speed, there was opposition and anger in the tones of the voices.

"Say the word, then, speak it out," cried one voice. "Say TOWN, d—— ye, or I'll floor your carcase."

"*Gown* or *Town?*" roared another; "speak, or by jingo——"

"Stand back, stand back, I say; halt, you knaves," shouted a third—"I am a clergyman."

Reginald thought it was certainly very like Mr. Keith's voice; but they were all on the dark side of the lane, and he listened for another moment.

"I am a clergyman, I am a priest, sirs," was reiterated.

"A clergyman! Then the devil's in't if you're not a gownsman—down with him, down with him, I say."

"Come, come, don't meddle with him; he's an old fellow, Hitchins."

"Old! d—— him, haven't they battered old Dry's windows about his ears? down with him!"

"Staund back, I say; help, help!—God sauf us! watch, watch! Stap out, ony one o' you, if you're MEN."

Reginald could no longer be mistaken: He seized the poker, got out upon the balcony, and dropt on the pavement in a twinkling.

"Gown or Town? Gown or Town?"

"Cowards! rascals! back, you scoundrels!—Mr. Keith, Mr. Keith, here, stand beside me, sir."

A violent tussle ensued: One fellow aimed a blow at the priest's head, which he parried *secundum artem*, and returned with energy. Of two that attacked Reginald, one got a push in the midriff that made him sick as a dog; the other, after inflicting a sharp cut with his stick, was repaid by a crashing blow that might have shivered the scapula of a Molineaux. The priest and another fellow, getting into close embrace, rolled down together, *town* uppermost, in the kennel. Black eyes and bloody noses were a drug. Reginald broke a bludgeon; but the poker flew from his grasp in doing so. Fists sounded like hammers for a few seconds; and then TOWN, first retreating for a few paces in silence, turned absolute tail, and ran into the street, screaming and bellowing, "TOWN! TOWN! TOWN!"

REGINALD. I am afraid you're hurt, sir. Take my arm, Mr. Keith.

KEITH. There—that's a braw lad. Foul fa' the tinkler loons! Four on an auld man!

REGINALD. Here's your pipe, sir ; I'm afraid 'tis quite broken.

KEITH. Never heed the stalk. Ah me, my bonny meershaum ! it's a' smashed—Just feel the bag, man.

REGINALD. Wrap your cloak about you, sir, and let's walk as fast as we can, for they may come back.

KEITH. My certy, there was ane o' them got his fairin—he'll no fash us. Come awa, come awa—but what am I saying? ye have lost your hat.

REGINALD. I never had it—never mind. Is your house far off?

KEITH. Nae lang gate—but mercy on me, I'm no gaun to take you wi' me at this time o' night, calland.

REGINALD. No time for speeches, Mr. Keith ; come along, show me the way, sir.

Enter PROCTOR.

PROCTOR. Here they are—here's some more of them—grapple them, my lads. Are these your companions, you scoundrel?

PRISONER (*blubbering*). Oh let me go, sir—let me go for this once!—doey, doey now.

KEITH. That's just one of the chaps that set on us. Keep your grip, lad, that's the very chield that flung me—I ken him by the red waistcoat.

PROCTOR. Who are you? Are you Gownsmen? Young man, how dare ye be without your academicals?

REGINALD. I'm not a member of the University, sir, though I mean to be so to-morrow morning. They were mauling this old gentleman in the street, and I came out to assist him.

BULL-DOG (*whispering* PROCTOR). 'Tis the new-comer Papish priest, your honour.

PROCTOR (*hastily*). Come, come, get away home, both of you ; and you, young man, what's your name—Dalton, do ye say? Be sure you call on me at ten o'clock. Come along, Roberts—look sharp, Munday.

So saying, the Proctor, a most portly figure in cap and gown, with long and wide black velvet-sleeves, together with his attendants, who were stout fellows, with loose blue gowns and batons, went off as hastily as they had come—their prisoner being quickened in his paces by an occasional kick, blow, or tug. The old Priest and Reginald, as soon as they were gone, proceeded arm in arm to the end of the bridge—not the slightest appearance of disturbance met them—everything was as quiet as if no *row* since time began had ever waked the echoes of the Charwell. The Priest stopped at the door of a small house in St. Clement's, and Reginald immediately touched the knocker for him. "Go your ways home to your bed, my kind young friend," quoth the Priest. "God bless you for all your kindness—Gae away hame now, and sleep sound, for you've done a good deed, my man—and I'll take it very kind indeed, if ye'll come and see me in the morning, if ye have leisure."

A soft female voice said from within, "Who's there?"

"It's me, my darling," answered the old man, and the door was opened. A young girl, with a candle in her hand, appeared in the entrance, and uttered something anxiously and quickly in a language which Reginald did not understand. "Mein susses kind," he answered—"my bonnie lassie, it's a mere scart, just a fleabite—I'm all safe and sound, thanks to this young gentleman.—Mr. Dalton, allow me to have the honour of presenting you to my niece, Miss Hesketh. Miss Hesketh, Mr. Dalton. But we shall all be better acquainted hereafter, I trust."

The old man shook Reginald most affectionately by the hand, and repeating his request that he should go instantly home, he entered the house—the door was closed—and Reginald stood alone upon the way. The thing had past in a single instant, yet when the vision withdrew, the boy felt as if that angel face could never quit his imagination. So fair, so pensive—yet so sweet and light a smile—such an air of hovering, timid grace—such a clear, soft eye—such raven silken tresses beneath that flowing veil—never had his eye beheld such a creature—it was as if he had had one momentary glimpse into some purer, happier, lovelier world than this.

He stood for some moments rivetted to the spot where this beautiful vision had gleamed upon him. He looked up and saw, as he thought, something white at one of the windows—but that too was gone ; and, after a little while, he began to walk back slowly into the city. He could not, however, but pause again for a moment when he reached the bridge ;—the tall fair tower of Magdalene appeared so exquisitely beautiful above its circling groves—and there was something so soothing to his imagination (pensive as it was at the moment) in the dark flow of the Charwell gurgling below him within its fringe of willows. He stood leaning over the parapet, enjoying the solemn loveliness of the scene, when of a sudden, the universal stillness was disturbed once more by a clamour of rushing feet and impetuous voices.

Anxious to get back to the inn without being involved in any new riot, he resumed and quickened his pace. By crossing to the dark side of the way, he hoped to escape observation, and gain his quarters in safety ; but the sounds became louder and louder as he advanced, and he had not moved many paces beyond the arch of old Anthony-a-Wood, ere he saw that a group of young men were standing at no great distance right before him on the street. One or two of them had caps on their heads, and they appeared for the moment to be all laying their heads together as in consultation, so that he said to himself they must be gownsmen, and so on

he went towards them, without fear of being molested.

He was hailed by the old cry, "Town or Gown?" when he came near them; but before he could make any answer, Frederick Chisney reeled from the midst of the group, and exclaimed, seizing him by the collar, "Oh you dog, where have you been hiding yourself? I called at both the Star and the King's Arms for you—Here, my hearties, here's my gay young freshman—here's my Westmoreland Johnny Raw"—he went on, hiccuping between every word—"here's my friend, Reginald Dalton, boys, we'll initiate him in style."

Reginald was instantly surrounded by a set of young fellows, all evidently very much flustered with wine, who saluted him with such violent shaking of hands, as is only to be expected from the "Baccho pleni," or acquaintances of ten years' standing.

"Stand fast, there!" cried Chisney, who seemed, though excessively drunk, to be in some sort the leader of the party. "Stand fast, my hearties, and we'll soon get caps and gowns for us all—this is certainly old Teddy's; but, by Jupiter, I can't read sign-posts by moonlight,——I never could. Look up, Dalton, your eye is unsophisticated—can you spell what's over the door, there?"

"There is nothing but THEED," he answered.

"Ah! by Jupiter, I knew I could not be far wrong. Well, now, what's to be done? shall we rouse old Snip?"

"Ring the bell," cried one.

"Do, do, Dalton, pull his wire for him, you are nearest it," cried another of the strangers.

"But why?" said Reginald; "what are you about? what are you wanting?"

"Hold your tongue," stuttered Chisney, "you'll soon see what we're after—but d—n me, the goose is not gone to roost yet—singing, by Jericho."

And to be sure, there was heard at the same moment a cracked and squeaking voice from the interior; they all listened out one stanza in patience—

"John Wilkes he was for Middlesex,
And they chose him the Knight of the Shire;
And he made a fool of Alderman Bull,
And called Parson Horne a liar."

"Hear how the old sinner squalls," quoth Chisney; "confound him, we'll soon stop his scrannel pipe."

But on went the noble strain:—

"King Nebuchadanosor
Lived in a costly palace,
He wore a crown of gold, and drank
His swipes in a golden chalice.

"He was the cock of great kings,
And Babel tower he builded,
His mutton it was served in a silver dish,
And his gingerbread was gilded."

And then two or three more "most vile voices" joined in the glorious chorus—

"But John Wilkes he was for Middlesex,
And they chose him the Knight of the Shire;
It was he made a fool of Alderman Bull,
And called Parson Horne a liar."

"No more of this stinking breath," roared Chisney. "Ring, Reginald." But before Dalton could utter any remonstrance, Chisney himself was at his side, and the bell-wire had snapt in his hand with an alarum that would have roused the seven sleepers. A momentary pause ensued and a bustling and whispering were heard within; a furious rattle with a cane-head seconded the bell—a window was thrown open above the door-way—and a highly-powdered head-piece, a solemn cadaverous face, and a pair of spectacles, made their appearance.

"In the name of ——, for the love of ——, who are you? Gentlemen, what do you want? Is this a time? What behaviour is—? Lord have mercy upon our souls! they're at Town and Gown!"

CHISNEY. No palavers, Master Theed, we want half-a-dozen academicals.

SECOND GOWNSMAN. Caps and gowns, you old snip. Open your door, or you're a gone fraction.

THEED. O gentlemen! O gentlemen! what a night is this! Doey, now, doey, now, go home to College, like good civil gentlemen.

THIRD GOWNSMAN. By the eternal fury, if you don't open——

FOURTH GOWNSMAN (*lifting up a paving stone*). Here goes, old Gander——

THEED. Alderman Plumridge—Alderman, I say, do you hear this? Takey care, gemmen, there's an alderman of Oxford in the house—takey good care what you do, gemmen.

FOURTH GOWNSMAN (*breaking a window*). You shall have next chance yourself, Theed.

ALDERMAN PLUMRIDGE. Gentlemen, do ye know me, gentlemen? Do ye know who I am, gentlemen? In the name of the Mayor and the King of England, I charge you all—keep——

CHISNEY. Keep *you* your peace, you infernal old cheesemonger!—Open the door this instant, I say, Theed.

SECOND GOWNSMAN. Shall I sport his oak, Chisney?

THEED. O Mr. Chisney, is that you, Mr. Chisney? That I should be so treated by an old customer! O Mr. Chisney, Mr. Chisney!

CHISNEY. I'll tell you what it is, Theed, if you don't open your door, and give us three or four caps and gowns—no matter what sort they are, anything that's in the shop—by Jupiter, you shall never put in a single stitch for Christ-Church.

THEED. O Mr. Chisney, Mr. Chisney, you were always a civil gentleman; but who have ye got with ye? I don't know the gentlemen.

I'm sure I would do anything for the University.

MRS. THEED (*opening another window, and in her night-cap*). O gentlemen, have ye seen our Teddy? O, for the love of goodness, have any of ye seen my Teddy Theed? Oh, what a woeful night is this!—(*Blubbers.*)

CHISNEY. He's safe enough, mother—he's in the Castle this half-hour, safe and sound—nothing but a black peeper from the Popish Priest.

MRS. THEED. From the Popish Priest? O judgment judge him! The Papish, the Papish to lick my Teddy!

THEED. Nothing but a black peeper! O goodness be praised!—But, O gentlemen, O Mr. Chisney, what a state am I in? what am I to do? what can I do? O Alderman! O Mrs. Theed! Oh Jem Brank! Speak to them, Jem—speak to the gemmen.

JEM BRANK (*appearing with his pipe in his mouth*). Gentlemen, I'm old Jem Brank, the barber of * * *—D—n me, I'm the boy that will stick by the tuft.—Are you resolved to have the gowns, gentlemen? Must I open the door for you, my masters?

THEED. O gentlemen—O Mr. Chisney! (*Aside.*) Oh, you d—— villain, Jem Brank! Was it for this I invited you ——? Will you come in by yourself, Mr. Chisney, and be responsible, and choose what you will have?

CHISNEY. To be sure, I will. There's a good fellow, Jem Brank—here's a crown for you.——

And with that in rushed the whole party, overturning Brank, Plumridge, Mrs. Theed, and three half-naked apprentices.

THEED. O Mr. Chisney! O the Alderman! O Mr. Plumridge! Oh Jack Horner! Oh Bill Tape? Oh my apprentices, my apprentices! Stop my apprentices! Oh what noise is this I hear!

CHISNEY. The caps this instant, you old devil, or you're a dead man. Don't you hear the row coming?

THEED (*opening a door*). Stand back, Mrs. Theed—Goey in, gentlemen—doey your pleasure—I'll neither make nor meddle, I call you to witness, Mr. Plumridge.

CHISNEY. Here, boys, here's your sort. Here's a cap for you, Hawkins—here's one for you, Dick Nowell. D—n me here's one with a gold tuft—take it, Sir James—you're the next step to honourable, however—and here's two gowns. By Jupiter, Dalton, you shall wear the doctor's one.

SIR JAMES. Go it, my hearties; lift all the ellwands.

MR. BRANK. Mayn't I take this cap under the table, my masters? I'm all for the Gown—they're a-coming—they're coming.

CHISNEY. On with it, old boy. And here, here's a gown for you too. Now fall in, all's tight. [*Exeunt.*

In short, by this time the High-street of Oxford exhibited a scene as different from its customary solemnity and silence as it is possible to imagine. Conceive several hundreds of young men in caps, or gowns, or both, but all of them, without exception, wearing some part of their academical insignia, retreating before a band rather more numerous, made up of apprentices, journeymen, labourers, bargemen—a motley mixture of everything that, in the phrase of that classical region, passes under the generic name of *Raff*. Several casual disturbances had occurred in different quarters of the town, a thing quite familiar to the last and all preceding ages, and by no means uncommon even in those recent days, whatever may be the case *now*. Of the host of youthful academics, just arrived for the beginning of the term, a considerable number had, as usual, been quartered for this night in the different inns of the city. Some of these, all full of wine and mischief, had first rushed out and swelled a mere passing scuffle into something like a substantial *row*. Herds of the town-boys, on the other hand, had been rapidly assembled by the magic influence of their accustomed war-cry. The row once formed into regular shape in the Corn-market, the clamour had penetrated walls, and overleapt battlements; from College to College the madness had spread and flown. Porters had been knocked down in one quarter, iron-bound gates forced in another, and the rope-ladder, and the sheet-ladder, and the headlong leap, had all been put into requisition, with as much eager, frantic, desperate zeal, as if every old monastic tower had been the scene of an unquenchable fire, every dim cloistered quadrangle of a yawning earthquake. In former days, as I have asserted, such things were of familiar occurrence. There is an old rhyme which says,

"Chronica si penses, cum pugnent Oxonienses,
Post aliquot menses, volat ira per Angliginenses."

Had such disturbances been interpreted as *pugnæ*, England could never have enjoyed five years of peace since she was the kingdom of kingdoms. But it was not so; they were regarded as but the casual effervescences of juvenile spirit, and no serious consequences ever attached or attributed to their occurrence.*

But to our story. Chisney and his companions, the wine of the Black Bear of Woodstock still fuming in their brains, were soon in the midst of the retreating togati; and our friend Reginald, dressed in the splendid attire of a Doctor of Physic, could scarcely, under all the circumstances, be blamed for following

* Though Hartford College has been erased from the list, I should hope the window, from which Charles Fox made that illustrious leap upon one of these occasions, has been spared by the piety of the present Chancellor.

their guidance. Jem Brank stuck close to the party, wielding in his fist the fine gold-headed cane of Mr. Alderman Plumridge. At the same instant, a dozen or two of stout young fellows rushed out from Queens' and University, and the front began to stand firm once more; while the animating shouts of these new allies were heard with fear and dismay by their assailants, who never doubted that the whole of New College had turned out, and who had on many former occasions been taught abundantly, that the *elèves* of William of Wickham can handle the single stick with as much grace as ever their great founder did the wreathed crosier.

It was now that a terrible conflict ensued—a conflict, the fury of which might have inspired lightness, vigour, and elasticity, even into the paragraphs of a Bentham, or the hexameters of a Southey—had either or both of these eminent persons been there to witness—better still had they been there to partake in, the genial phrenzy. It was now that "The Science" (to use the language of Thalaba) "made itself to be *felt*." It was now that (in the words of Wordsworth,) "the power of cudgels was a visible thing." It was now that many a gown covered, as erst that of the Lady Christabelle,

> "half a bosom and a side!
> A sight to dream of, not to see."

It was now that there was no need for that pathetic apostrophe of another living Sonneteer—

> "Away all specious pliancy of mind
> In men of low degree!"

For it was now that the strong Bargeman of Isis, and the strong Bachelor of Brazen-nose, rushed together "like two clouds with thunder laden," and that the old reproach of "Baculo potius," &c., was for ever done away with. It was now that the Proctor, even the portly Proctor, showed, that he had sat at the feet of other Jacksons besides Cyril;—

"For he that came to preach, remained to play."

In a word, there was an elegant tussle which lasted for five minutes, opposite to the side-porch of All-Souls. There the townsmen gave way; but being pursued with horrible oaths and blows as far as Carfax, they rallied again under the shadow of that sacred edifice, and received there a welcome reinforcement from the purlieus of the Staffordshire Canal, and the ingenuous youth of Penny-farthing Street. Once more the tide of war was turned; the gowned phalanx gave back—surly and slow, indeed, but still they did give back. On rolled the adverse and swelling tide with their "few plain instincts and their few plain rules." At every College gate sounded, as the retreating band passed its venerable precincts, the loud, the shrilly summons of—"Gown! Gown!"—while down each murky plebeian alley, the snoring mechanic doffed his night-cap to the alarum of—"Town! Town!" Long and loud the tumult continued in its fearful rage, and much excellent work was accomplished. Long and lasting shall be the tokens of its wrath—long shall be the faces of Pegge, Wall, Kidd (and light shall be their hearts), as they walk their rounds to-morrow morning—long shall be the stately stride of Ireland, and long the clysterpipe of West—long and deep shall be the probing of thy skilful lancet, O Tuckwell; and long shall all your bills be, and long, very long, shall it be ere some of them are paid. Yet, such the gracious accident, homicide was not.

A third furious battle took place on that fair and spacious area which intervenes between Magdalene's reverend front and the Botanic Garden. But the constables of the city, and the bull-dogs of the University, here at last uniting their forces, plunged their sturdy wedge into the thickest mass of the confusion. Many, on both sides, were right glad of a decent excuse, and dispersion followed. But up towards Holywell, and down towards Love Lane, and away over the waters of Charwell toward St. Clement's parish, the war still lingered in fragments, and was renewed at intervals.

Reginald, although a nimble and active young fellow, broad in the chest, narrow in the pelvis, thick in the neck, and lightsome in the region of the bread-basket, a good leaper, and a runner among ten thousand, was not, as has been formerly mentioned, a fencer; neither was he a wrestler, nor a boxer, nor an expert hand at the baton. These were accomplishments, of which, his education having, according to Mr. Macdonald's taunt, been "negleckit," he had yet received scarcely the slightest tincture. The consequence was, that upon the whole, though his exertions were neither few nor far between, he was, if mauling were sin, fully more sinned against than sinning. The last thing he could charge his memory withal, when he afterwards endeavoured to arrange its "disjecta fragmenta," was the vision of a brawny arm uplifted over against him, and the moon shedding her light very distinctly upon the red spoke of a coach-wheel, with which that arm appeared to be intimately connected.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STRANGE AWAKENING.

REGINALD had been awake, in a certain sense of the word, for some minutes, ere he could command anything like a recollection of what had passed. His head was hot, and there was a feeling both of numbness and of pain about his limbs, insomuch, that he could scarcely at first turn from one side to the other. A confused remembrance of noise,

shouting, clamour, blows, flight, pursuit, rose within him. He made an effort, pulled aside his bed-curtains, and immediately perceived that he had not been taking his ease in his inn.

In fact it was broad daylight, and when the curtain was withdrawn, he could see the open fields almost without lifting himself above the pillow on which his head had rested; the features of the landscape were quite new to his eye, and he remembered, after a moment's consideration, that the window of his bed-chamber at the inn had looked out upon a tall pile of Gothic building.

But besides all this, the room in which he found himself had no sort of appearance of belonging to a house of public entertainment. It was small, but neatly furnished; there were books lying about, and other symptoms of habitation. Above all, right opposite to him, there stood a sofa, with disordered bed-clothes heaped above the cushions, just as if some one had risen from a couch of temporary preparation.

He had gradually raised himself upon his bed, while taking these observations, and a moment after, he heard footsteps as if ascending a wooden staircase. The door was gently opened, and Mr. Keith stole softly into the room, treading on his stocking-soles. The old gentleman's abundant periwig had been replaced by a small scull-cap of black velvet, and his black coat by a short surtout of purple serge, and Reginald could scarcely have recognised him at first glance but for the sound of his voice. "Hah! my bonnie lad," he said, advancing on tip-toe to the bed-side, "so you're alive at last again? My word, ye've ta'en a braw sleep on't, however.—Give me your hand, man—ha! we'll do very well, a little heat, but nothing to speak of—no bones broken, no fears, no fears—let me look at your head, man?"

So speaking, Mr. Keith untied a handkerchief, lifted Reginald's night-cap off his brow, and applying a delicate finger all round the edges of a black patch of considerable magnitude, said,—"Yes, yes, the swelling's nothing, nothing at all; ye'll be ne'er a hair the worse for all that's happened. O dear! Mr. Dalton, I cannot say how glad I am to find things this way. What a sore heart it would have been if ye had gotten some serious injury, and a' for your kindness to a poor old man that ye never saw in your life before. Od, sir, I cannot say what I think about it. God be praised, God be praised, 'tis all well now."

"My dear sir," said Reginald, "I beg you will not distress me; but my recollection is very much confused. Where am I?—am I in your house, Mr. Keith?"

"'Deed are you, my young friend; and I'm sure I may well bless Providence for the accident that enabled us to take you in. There was a terrible hillibaloo on the road, and Ellen Hesketh came to my door and wakened me—I had just fallen over—and said there was a crowd of lads fighting, and a dead man lying beside our door. I rose up as fast as I could, man, but they were all away ere I could get out, and nothing left behind but an old hat or two, and the dead man, who, I am most heartily happy to say, has had a joyful resurrection."

"Myself?" said Reginald.

"Ay, just yourself; we got warm vinegar and rubbed your brows, and as soon as we saw that there was nothing but the cut on your head—i'faith little Ellen was not three years in the Anton's Kloster for nothing, man—we got ye all dressed and bandaged in no time, and into the bed wi' you. Hoot, it will not be visible in two days' time, man; there's a wonderful *vis renovatrix* about folk at your time of day—a glorious *vis renovatrix*. Rise up, man, and put on your clothes, we've kept the breakfast things on the table for you."

"What o'clock may it be?" said Reginald.

"That's true," quoth the priest, "I had forgotten my watch;" and with this he walked across the chamber towards the sofa, and took possession of a huge old-fashioned affair of gold chased work, which had been lying beneath the pillow.

"My dear sir," said Reginald, raising himself higher in his bed, "I fear—Is it so? I greatly fear you have slept there. God bless me, I have robbed you of your bed."

"Hoots, hoots, what's a' this about? Never heed, my braw man."

"I am distressed, ashamed——"

"Hold your tongue, hold your tongue, callant; I'm an old campaigner."

"Indeed, indeed, my dear Mr. Keith——"

"Indeed, indeed, my dear Mr. Dalton, 'tis past eleven o'clock, and your trunk's at the door, and ye had mickle better rise up."

So saying, the old gentleman dragged in Reginald's portmanteau, and shaking his finger so as to cut short all further speechification, retreated out of the chamber. Our youth got out of bed with a little difficulty, but without delay; and when he looked at the melancholy condition of the coat in which he had travelled, he had good reason to thank his kind host for the precaution of sending to the inn for a new supply of raiment.

Reginald, on surveying his own image in the mirror, was a good deal startled with the whiteness of his countenance; but both this and the stiffness of his joints were very much gone ere he had finished his toilet, and at length he descended the staircase, looking perhaps rather more interesting than he might have done, had there been neither paleness nor patch. The old priest issued forth when he heard him coming down, and ushered him into the parlour where Miss Hesketh had coffee and toast ready for his reception. It may be taken for granted that he was in a

condition for doing great justice to his breakfast, yet we should be giving a very false account of things, if we omitted to insinuate that the fair creature who sat by his side, and filled and refilled his cup for him, had a far greater share of his attention.

She spoke to him easily, kindly, gaily—praised him for his interference in Mr. Keith's favour—half-roguishly questioned him about the after events of the evening—gave him playful little hints about the propriety of keeping out of such scrapes for the future ; and all this she did in pure English, but with an accent about which there was something not less distinctly foreign than there was in the whole of her own appearance, dress, and demeanour. A beautiful girl, indeed, she was, a smile of gentle fearless innocence sat enthroned in her soft dark eyes ; and if now and then a shade of pensiveness hovered over their drooping lids, it was chased in a moment by the returning radiance of that young and virgin glee. Her rich raven tresses were gathered beneath a silken net upon the back part of her head, leaving the fair open front entirely unshaded ; and this, together with the style of her dress, which was plainer, fuller, and infinitely more *modest* than was at that time fashionable among English ladies, and the little golden cross, hung from a rosary of black beads about her neck, gave to the *toute ensemble* a certain grave and nun-like character—not perhaps the less piquant on account of the contrast which that presented to the cheerful and airy grace of her manners. There was such a total artlessness about everything Miss Hesketh said and did, that Reginald, although but little accustomed to the society of young unmarried ladies, and full enough of those indescribable feelings which generally render unsophisticated young people shy and reserved in their first intercourse with others of a different sex, could not withstand the charming fascination, but spoke and smiled in his turn as if they had been old acquaintance.

How much of this ease on both sides might be the effect of the gay and kind old gentleman's presence, I cannot pretend to say. In all such cases, the influence of a *tertium quid* is, without question, powerful ; and the fact is certain, that when, on a knock of rather alarming loudness coming to the door of the house, Mr. Keith went out of the apartment in which they were sitting, the young couple, left to themselves, became suddenly as reserved as they had the minute before been the reverse. They were both sitting in silence—trifling, the one with his tea-spoon, and the other with her rosary, when, after the interval of a minute or two, Mr. Keith re-entered the parlour in company with Frederick Chisney. "No apologies," he was saying—"no apologies, I pray, sir—you'll find Mr. Dalton as well as a man can be that has had a tift overnight, and a sound sleep to come after it."

There were no traces about Chisney's exterior, of the affray in which he had borne so principal a part. Fresh in colour, gay in aspect, and dressed in the full academics of a Gentleman Commoner—one of the most graceful, certainly, of all European costumes—perhaps his fine person had never been exhibited to greater advantage than it was now. The moment he was introduced to Miss Hesketh, he began to lavish upon her all the nothings and everythings of easy, assured, accustomed gallantry ; and, it must be confessed, that poor Reginald was not without some little feelings of rather a painful sort, when he observed with what perfect and fearless facility his handsome friend made prize of the young lady's attentions. After a little while, however, Mr. Chisney, whether or not he had read something like a rebuke in the old priest's eye, stopped short suddenly in this "*beau chemin*," where, in spite of the adage, he was but too apt "*trop courir*." He rose from his seat, and, observing that Reginald would have but little enough time to be entered before dinner, made his most respectful bow to Mr. Keith and his fair niece.

The old man drew our youth back again for a moment, after Chisney had walked out of the room, and said in a whisper, once more cordially shaking him by the hand,—"Now, take ye care o' yourself, my dear Mr. Dalton—take ye good care o' yourself, my dear young man. You're far from your friends, and you've got wild hempies enow to draw ye aside, if ye'll but yield to them—take an old man's advice, and look carefully to what ye do at the outset ; and, hear ye, Mr. Dalton, I'll take it very kind if you'll sometimes spare a little o' your time to come and see us here in our quiet dwelling. We live a very sober life, but we'll aye have a mutton-chop for you, man, and a very hearty, hearty welcome.'

Reginald caught one of Miss Hesketh's smiles—a grave, but still a very gentle one—ere he made a fitting answer to the old priest's kind invitation. He then said that he would send for his portmanteau in the course of the morning, and joined Chisney, who stood whistling beyond the threshold.

He took hold of Reginald's arm, and they had walked a few paces down Heddington Hill, ere anything was said. It was Chisney who began. "By my faith," he said, with a malicious smile—"by my faith, Dalton, the old boy has a fair taste. She's a pretty creature, on my soul. Ah ! hang them, leave them alone for choosing——"

"'Tis Mr. Keith's niece," quoth Reginald, rather hastily. "I don't know what ye mean, Chisney, Miss Hesketh is——"

"His *niece*—ay, that's the play, is it ? I thought, perhaps, *cousin* might have been the word."

"I really can't comprehend you. I never was more kindly treated in my life—he's a most respectable old gentleman, apparently ;

and Miss Hesketh, I am sure, you must allow——"

"Is a most charming creature. Certainly, Dalton, I said nothing against her eyes—they're as pretty a little wicked pair of eyes as ever I saw the devil nestled in."

"I don't understand you. She seems to me to be a most amiable and interesting young lady."

"Ha! ha!—most amiable and interesting, indeed! Do you know how long it may be since she paid her last visit to the uncle in the country?"

"The uncle in the country? I protest, I can't make anything of what you say."

"Why, Gad-a-mercy, Reginald Dalton, are you really such a Johnny-Raw as this comes to? Were you taken in, you foolish fellow? Did you bite, *bonâ fide?* Did you not smoke the monkey?"

"I know nothing of what you say. I saw nothing but a good kind old man, and a beautiful girl, who treats him as if she were his daughter. I really can't endure——"

"Well, take your own way. *La petite Française*——"

"She's no Frenchwoman, Chisney; she's an Englishwoman, a Scotchwoman, I mean. At least her uncle is Scotch; but they've been living a long time in Germany."

"In Germany! better and better still. Sentiment to the collar-bone, you may swear. I suppose ye thought of Mynheer Werter and Mrs. Charlotte, when she was spreading your toast for you."

"I don't know anything about Werter and Mrs. Charlotte."

"No, no, I acquit you—nor about Mademoiselle Julie and Monsieur St. Preux neither, I dare say. The Vicar kept no such filthy seductive books at Lannwell. You're pure, I see, quite pure—immaculate—intact. Well, I'll say nothing more about the matter." He added with another provoking smile, "*Maxima debetur pueris reverentia.*"

Reginald had seldom felt more inclined to be angry. Perhaps he had been a little sore with what passed ere they left Mr. Keith's—but this sneering strain had much aggravated the feeling. He kept silence, however, for he saw that he had not the means of producing any change on Chisney's modes of thinking—but after a little while he said, abruptly, "I do not think I shall be of Christchurch, Chisney."

"I don't think it, neither," answered Frederick, drily; "for I made inquiry, and there's never a room for anybody until after Easter. But where will you go?"

"I shall, in the first place, go to * * * College, if you will show me where it stands, and consult my father's friend, Mr. Barton—I've got letters for him in my pocket."

"Well, please yourself, my hearty; * * * is, after all, a fairish enough place—there's some very good fellows of my acquaintance in * * *—several old Etonians—Dick Stukeley, and some others—very pleasant company indeed—You may pass your time very merrily at * * *."

"My purpose is to be a student, Chisney; I mean to have nothing whatever to do with your dissipation."

Chisney turned round, and staring him in the face, burst into a fit of incontrollable laughter. "Nothing to do with *my* dissipation? You mean to be a student, forsooth! Why, am I no student, Mr. Reginald? Do you really suppose I have not as much Heathen Greek in my cap, as e'er a plodding jack-ass that chews Hederick within the ring of Tom? Do you really imagine a man reads the worse for a spree overnight? Hang it, hang it, man! I protest I'm ashamed of you—you'll take at least a term's combing, Reginald."

"I shall adhere to my resolution, Frederick."

"Well, well, please yourself in the mean time, however—I know you better than you do yourself, my hearty—by and by you'll come it gaily—no fear of you—But what's the use of prosing? We're at the gateway—this is old * * *. Do you jump away, deliver your letter—you'll find him a rum one, I believe—I'll take a walk in the garden till you have done with him—but don't keep me kicking my heels longer than is necessary, for I have got to see you rigged at Theed's yet before dinner, you know."

These words were spoken beneath the shadow of a very old and venerable building—by no means one of the first-rate Colleges in Oxford, but one which has had the honour to maintain for many centuries a character of eminent respectability. Reginald, when he had passed the portal, and surveyed the modest and unpretending, but very beautiful architecture within—the quiet cloister, the graceful tower, the ivy-mantled windows—thought within himself that *here* he fain would be at home. The old porter, who obeyed Chisney's thundering summons at the lodge, testified a good deal of surprise, when Reginald, with the letter in his hand, asked to be shown to Mr. Barton's apartments—but, after pausing for a moment, he said, "Certainly, sir, I shall deliver the letter, and perhaps Mr. Barton may see you."

With this he preceded the young men along the cloister; and when he stopped at Mr. Barton's stair-case, Chisney passed on towards the gardens.

CHAPTER XIX.

A RECLUSE.

MR. DANIEL BARTON, of * * * College, was a man, the like of whom it would be in vain to seek for in England beyond the walls of Oxford or Cambridge. Though a keen

and indefatigable student in his very early years, he had, during the latter part of his residence at the University as an Undergraduate, partaken more in the pleasures than in the labours of the place. His behaviour in this respect had considerably irritated his father, who had formed extravagant expectations from the precocious diligence of his boyhood. He left England for a season, and by forming an imprudent matrimonial connection in a foreign country, aggravated so deeply his father's displeasure, that on the death of the old gentleman, which occurred very soon afterwards, he found himself cut off from the succession to a respectable family estate, and left in the world with no better provision than a very trifling annuity. His pretty little Swiss did not live long enough to be much of a burden to his slender resources. She died abroad, and he, immediately on his return to England, came back to Oxford a melancholy and disappointed man.

He was fortunate enough to obtain a fellowship in * * * College very soon after this, and took possession of the chambers in which Reginald Dalton was now about to be introduced to him. Here his irritated temper did not prevent him from seeking and finding occupation and consolation in his books. The few old friends he then possessed in the University, being, ere long, taken away from his neighbourhood, and scattered over the world in various professions, his habits of reading became more and more his resource;—and at length they constituted his only one. The head of his own College was a man he did not like, and gradually the society of the common room, formed of course of this man's favourites, came to be quite irksome to him. In short, he had now for many years lived the life of a hermit—temperate to abstinence, studious to slavery, in utter solitude, without a friend or a companion. Years and years had glided over a head scarcely conscious of their lapse. Day after day the same little walk had been taken exactly at the same hour; the same silent servant had carried in his commons; the arrival of a new box of *old* books had been his only novelty; his only visits had been paid to the Bodleian and the Clarendon.

His income, however, was so very limited, that necessity—particularly at the outset—would have made him willing enough to take a share in superintending the education of the young gentlemen at his College; but the Provost and he had never, as we have seen, been friends, and amidst abundance of more active competitors, it was nothing wonderful that he had remained, for far the greater part of his time, destitute of pupils. Now and then some accident threw a young man in his way—some old family or county connection, or the like. When he had such a duty imposed on him, he had ever discharged it honestly and zealously; but very young men like to be *together* even in their hours of labour, and, great as, in process of time, Mr. Barton's literary reputation had grown to be, seldom was any one ambitious of profiting by his solitary instructions. His last pupil had left College more than a year ago, and the arrival of another was not only a thing altogether unexpected, but—occupied as he was in preparing an extensive and very laborious work for the press, and every day more and more wedded to his toil—it was a thing of which, if he thought of it at all, he certainly had never brought himself to be desirous.

Although the prime of his manhood was scarcely gone by, the habits of this learned Recluse had already stamped his person with something near akin to the semblance of age. His cheek was pale—his eye gleamed, for it was still bright, beneath grey and contracted brows; his front was seamed with wrinkles, and a meagre attenuated hand turned the huge folio page, or guided the indefatigable pen. Such was the appearance of one who had long forgotten the living, and conversed only with the dead, whose lamp had been to him more than the sun, whose world had been his chamber.

The studies to which he had chiefly devoted his time were mathematical; yet he had, long ere now, made himself a classical scholar of very high rank. Of modern literature he was almost entirely ignorant. It would have been difficult to find one English volume among every fifty in his possession, and certainly there was not one there that had been published for the last twenty years. Of all the lighter and more transitory productions which were at the moment interesting common readers, he knew no more than if they had been written in an antediluvian tongue. If anybody had asked him what was the last book of celebrity that had issued from the English press, he would probably have named Burke's 'Reflections,' or Johnson's 'Lives of the Poets'; and it is not improbable that he would have named them with a sneer, and pointed in triumph to his 'Demosthenes' or his 'Athenæus.' Such a character may be taken for a mere piece of fancy-work; yet how many are there among the inmates of those venerable cloisters, that, without having either deserted their Common Rooms, or earned premature greyness among the folios of ancient times, are contented to know just as little about all such matters as satisfied Mr. Barton!

Of recent events, he knew almost as little as of recent books. Excepting from the fasts and thanksgivings of the Church—or perhaps from some old newspaper brought to him accidentally along with his supply of snuff or stationery—he heard rarely either of our triumphs or of our defeats. The old College servant who attended him daily in his chamber, had, long ere now, acquired the habit of performing his easy functions without dis-

turbing him by many words; and even the talkative vein of Jem Brank, who dressed Mr. Barton's hair every Sunday morning, had learned, by degrees, the uncongenial lesson of restraint. In truth, the extraordinary seclusion in which he lived, the general opinion as to the greatness of his acquirements, the vague belief that some unfortunate event had saddened his mind and changed his pursuits, and the knowledge that there was some misunderstanding, or at least a very considerable coldness, between him and the more active members of the society to which he belonged —these circumstances, taken all together, had invested the ordinary idea of Mr. Barton's character with a certain gloom of mystery—and the merriest menials of the place, even where the buttery hatch was double-barred, and the ale double stout, lowered their voices into whispers, if his name was mentioned.

Many long winters had elapsed since Mr. Barton had even heard the name of his old acquaintance the Vicar of Lannwell, yet, when he had read Mr. Dalton's letter, and received intimation that the young gentleman who had brought it was waiting at the door of his apartment, that affection with which all good men delight to remember the associates of their young and happy years, was at once revived in his heart. There was something both of tender and of sad in the smile with which he rose to welcome Reginald, but the pressure of his hand was warm and fervid. In surveying the blooming boy, he could not help recalling the merry days when he and the boy's father had worn cheeks as smooth, and curls as glossy. He turned round, half unconsciously, to a little mirror which hung over his chimney-piece, and after regarding his own image there for a moment or two in silence, "Ah! young gentleman," he said, "it is now a long look to the time when your worthy father and I made acquaintance;—we have been cast on different courses of life, but I assure you it is very pleasant to me to hear of his welfare, and to see his son. Your father is well, and happy; I trust it is so, indeed." He added, almost in a whisper, "When we knew each other, I was the gayer of the two—perhaps it is otherwise now."

But, almost before Reginald had answered his inquiries about the good Vicar, Mr. Barton had again seated himself on his accustomed chair, and his hand had instinctively resumed the pen. Though every now and then gazing for a moment on the young man's face, he did this with a look of vacant abstraction, and seemed, indeed, to be quite unable to keep his mind from the work in which he was engaged. A considerable number of minutes, therefore, elapsed before Reginald could command so much of his attention as to be able to make him understand that he had come thither with the intention of becoming a member of * * *, and commencing his academical studies under his own direction.

This, however, once more roused him. After reflecting for a few moments, he rose from his chair, and said, in a very kind manner, "Indeed, Mr. Dalton, I know not very well what to say to this; I am exceedingly happy to see the son of my old friend, and any assistance I can give should surely be given to him with gladness. But I have fallen out of the way of these things, Mr. Dalton; I have forgotten, and I have been forgotten; there are other and more active people here, and I must just whisper into your ear, that I don't think our Provost will be disposed to receive you the more graciously because *I* introduce you."

"You are my father's friend," answered Reginald; "it is under your care he will think I am the safest—and indeed, indeed, sir, I beg you to take me, for I have seen enough already to be convinced that I shall be surrounded with temptation, and I would fain, very fain, have my father's friend to be my guardian."

"Ay, indeed," said Barton; "you speak very seriously, my young friend. It is not so that young gentlemen for the most part look on things when they come hither for the first time. I pray you, tell me has anything happened to you?—Can I do anything for you?"

"Nay, indeed, sir," said Reginald; "I want nothing but that you should take me for your pupil. I have a gay young friend here, who, if you do not, may, I fear, place me where I should be less safe, and where I shall, therefore, be less happy. Indeed, sir, I desire to be diligent, and to please my father. I would very fain have your guidance."

"Then you shall have it," answered Barton, seriously; "you shall have what I can give you. Look round here; you shall command my library, and you shall spend a couple of hours every day with me; but more, I fear, I cannot promise you. You must exert yourself, my young friend, and you must trust to *yourself*."

"I hope to be a hard reader, sir," said the youth, "and I mean to live as retiredly as is possible."

"Nay, nay," quoth Mr. Barton, "I must not hear you speak quite so, neither. You are young, the world is before you; you are to be a man and a citizen, and you must not think to spend your days here as if you were destined to become an old monkish fixture like myself." Reginald was rather at a loss for any answer to this, but while he was hesitating, the Recluse proceeded.—"This is my *home*," he said; "I shall live and die among these old towers, Mr. Dalton. I have bid adieu to the world long ago, and I know little of what is passing in it. But you, sir, are like to have duties and occupations of

another sort; for these you can only fit yourself by learning the world's learning, and living amidst the world. No, no, my young friend, read, study, make yourself a scholar, and *there* command my poor help such as it is—but mix freely with your contemporaries, indeed you must do so—live with them, and learn of them—you will, I doubt not, find amiable, honourable friends, friends that will be like brothers to you now—ay, and remember you long after this with the kindness of brothers. He that has made no friends in his youth, will scarcely find them in his manhood, and perhaps he may miss them sorely in his age."

There was something of solemnity in his way of saying these things—so much so, that young Reginald listened without thinking of making any answer. The pensive scholar cast a look round his chamber, as if to say, Behold *my* friends! and, resuming his seat, said, "Excuse me for a very few moments, and I shall go with you to the Provost."

He began writing eagerly, and continued to do so for perhaps a quarter of an hour, without taking any further notice of Reginald's presence. The boy, meanwhile, full of serious thoughts and high resolutions, perused the chamber of the learned hermit round and round, as if he had expected the inspiration of lore to be breathed from its walls. The room was part of a very ancient building, and everything about it was stamped with antiquity. The high roof of dark unvarnished oak—the one tall, narrow window, sunk deep in the massy wall—the venerable volumes with which the sides of the apartment were everywhere clothed—the bare wainscot-floor, accurately polished, but destitute of carpeting, excepting the small fragment under the table—the want of furniture—for there were just two chairs, and a heap of folios had been dislodged, ere he himself could occupy one of them—the chillness of the place too, for, although the day was frosty, there was no fire in the grate—all these, together with the worn, emaciated, and pallid countenance of the solitary tenant, and the fire of learned zeal which glowed so bright in his fixed and steadfast, but nevertheless melancholy eye, impressed Reginald with a mingled feeling of surprise, of admiration, of reverence, and of pity.

Mr. Barton rose when he had come to the end of his paragraph, locked his desk, and retired to his bed-chamber, to which he had access by a small stair-case, constructed in the turret that flanked his apartments. He returned in a few minutes, after having laid aside the dressing-gown in which he was accustomed to study, and assumed the only other garb in which he had appeared for a long course of years—his academical cap and gown. "We will now go at once to the Provost," he said, "for it is improper that you should be another day in Oxford without becoming a member of the University."

The apartments of the Head of the Society presented a very different sort of appearance from those of the recluse and laborious Senior Fellow of * * *. Reginald was conducted, in short, into a very handsome house, furnished in every part in a style of profuse modern luxury, such as perhaps did not quite accord either with the character of the edifice to which it belonged, or with the form and structure of the different apartments themselves. After waiting for a considerable time in a large and lofty room, where chintz curtains and ottomans, elegant paper-hangings, and splendid pier-glasses, contrasted strangely enough with a great Gothic window, of the richest monastic painted glass, a roof of solid stone, carved all over with flowers, mitres, shields of arms, and heads of martyrs, and a fire-place, whose form and dimensions spoke it at least three centuries old—they were at last admitted into the presence of the Provost. He received them in his library—what a different kind of library from that which Reginald had just left! New and finely-bound books, arranged in magnificent cases of glass and mahogany—the 'Courier,' a number of the 'Quarterly,' and a novel of Miss Edgeworth, reposing on a rose-wood table covered with a small Persian carpet—some of Bunbury's caricatures, coloured and in gilt frames—a massive silver standish, without a drop of ink upon its brilliant surface—deep soft chairs in red morocco—a parrot-cage by the window—and a plump pet poodle upon the hearth-rug—these were among the by no means "*curta supellex*," of this more mundane "thinking shop."—A gay-looking junior fellow and chaplain was caressing the poodle, and the Head himself, a rubicund old gentleman in grand canonicals and a grizzle-wig, was seated in a dignified posture in a superb *fauteuil*, while a padded foot-stool sustained in advance his gouty left leg.

Reginald, who had just been told by Mr. Barton himself, that he and the Provost were upon very indifferent terms, had naturally expected to see them meet with cold looks; but he was quite mistaken. This haughty old Ecclesiastic was far too much the man of the world to carry his heart upon his sleeve, and he welcomed the pale recluse with smiles of the softest, and speeches of the politest order. "My dear Mr. Barton," said he, "I am *so* happy to see you again; I began to think you had really quite buried yourself alive; and I am so doubly happy to see you with a pupil in your hand. I beg you to be seated, Barton, and you, my young gentleman—didn't you say the name was Dalton, Barton?—do you, too, find a chair for yourself, Mr. Dalton.—Well, Barton, and how does the *magnum opus* get on? Ah! you shake your head, but I hear fine things of it notwithstanding. Well, you are determined

that old * * * shall hold up her head one day, however. But to business, to business. —Ainsworth, don't hurt old Bab's ear, my dear fellow—Just reach me the Buttery-book, Ainsworth, that we may see what rooms are vacant."

Mr. Ainsworth's fond attachment for the poodle did not prevent him from instantly complying with the request of the Superior. The Mighty Book was unclasped and expanded before the Provost, and he, after mounting his spectacles, and running over a few columns, said, "Ha! 'tis very fortunate this indeed. I find there's a very nice little set of rooms at your service, Mr. Dalton—small but comfortable—rent a trifle—furniture neat—*thirds* moderate—yes, yes, just what one could have wished—they belonged to a very pretty young man who was drowned in the Charwell, last summer. I hope you are no swimmer, Mr. Dalton—be sure you don't get into the Charwell in cold weather—nothing stands against cramp, sir—we must not have you go the same way with poor little Polewhele.—Ainsworth, you'll see the Manciple, and desire Polewhele's rooms to be got ready immediately for Mr. Dalton.—Here, Mr. Dalton, I need not ask if you're sixteen years of age —Reach me the Testament and Parecbole oft the chimney-piece, Ainsworth.—Come now, Mr. Dalton, kiss the book, and Ainsworth will swear you in for me."

The passive youth, of course, took all the oaths they proposed to him. He renounced in due form the Devil, the Pope, the Pretender, and the authority of the Mayor of Oxford. He swore that he would never believe anything but what is written in the XXXIX Articles of the Church of England—he swore that he would never miss the prayers, the lectures, or the dinners of his College—he swore that he would wear clothes "coloris nigri aut subfusci," and cut according to the University pattern (which, by the way, has undergone no alteration since the time of Charles II.)—he swore that he would never "nourish whiskers or curls," nor indulge in "absurdo illo et fastuoso publicè in ocreis ambulandi more," which means, being interpreted, "that absurd and arrogant fashion of walking publicly in boots or gaiters"—he swore that he would never drive a tandem, nor neglect to cap a Master of Arts, nor acknowledge the University of Ipswich *—in short Jeremy Bentham's 'Church-of-Englandism' had not yet seen the light, and so Reginald, whatever scruples he might have entertained, had the thing occurred at a subsequent and more enlightened period, never dreamt of hesitating to do that which his fathers had done before him, and which it is by no means improbable, his children and his children's children, if he ever have any, may do after him.

All the oaths being sworn, and all the fees being paid, Mr. Barton, Mr. Ainsworth, and Reginald, quitted the Provost's lodge together. Mr. Barton, drawing the youth aside for a moment, whispered that he could be of no further service for the present, and that he should expect a visit from him the next day after breakfast. With this the recluse returned to his cell; and Mr. Ainsworth, summoning manciples, porters, bed-makers, and a whole crowd of subordinate functionaries about him, quickly completed all the arrangements that were necessary for the installing of Reginald in his apartments. The youth, after seeing his rooms, and sending for his baggage, made the best of his way into the College gardens, where Chisney was still expecting him, in the midst of a merry group, whose game at bowls his advent had interrupted.

Mr. Frederick, after introducing our youth to some of his future messmates, proposed walking down the High-street, and favouring him with his advice at the tailor's and elsewhere.

Reginald was rather astonished, after all that had happened the night before, by the utter *nonchalance* with which Chisney entered the precincts of Mr. Theed, and still more by the bland and courteous reception which the tailor gave him. To say truth, the many breaches which the night's work had occasioned in the continuity of silks and broad-cloths had quite consoled Teddy Major for those which had taken place upon the skin of Teddy Minor. He bowed the gentlemen into his shop, where that promising young man, now the most humble and obsequious of all disconsolate dandies, was cutting out new gowns and caps, to replace those which had been torn and shattered by the violence of his brother *Oppidani*. A green shade protected the damaged eye, and but for that unfortunate memorial of the affray, there was certainly nothing about Mr. Theed, junior, which could have led any one to imagine that he could ever have lifted an irreverent hand against the smallest shred of the sable vestment of Rhedycina. The abject submission of his present demeanour was, however, an apology of which Mr. Chisney deigned not to take any notice, until the overflowing chat of the officious mother forced it upon his attention.

"Now goodness have gracious mercy upon me!" she said, curtseying into the shop, with a well-furnished salver in her hand—"Now how should I be mistaken—I was sure it was Mr. Chisney I heard. Now do, your honours, do take a glass of my own bottle, that I may be certain sure bygones are bygones. O Mr. Chisney, what a night did I pass! never a wink had I, Mr. Chisney. Mr. Theed, says I, are you asleep, says I? are you asleep, Mr. Theed, upon all this, and perhaps never put in a stitch for Christ-church again as long as your name's Teddy Theed?—Now doey, my dear good Mr. Chisney, doey now take a drop

* There *was* an attempt to establish such a university about four hundred years ago.

of my orange-water—and you, Teddy Theed, Teddy Theed, I say, is your eye so black that you can't see the gentlemen? Why aren't you down on your knees, you good-for-nothing ——?—cutting; cutting; marking, marking!—O Teddy Theed, it may well be seen that you'll bring our grey hairs in sorrow to our grave! You'll be discommons'd, sirrah!—do you hear me, you'll be discommons'd ere you die, I say, and then what will become of us?—a name, Mr. Chisney, that has been known in Oxford for these fifty, ay, for these hundred of years. Down, down on your knees, I say, Teddy Theed."

"Lord bless you, ma'am," cries Chisney, "what the devil is all this rumpus about now? Teddy has got a black eye from the Papist Priest, and I'm sure that's sufficient punishment for him."

"Punishment! Mr. Chisney!—you were always a civil, well-spoken, sweet-tempered gentleman—that's your name, Mr. Chisney—from Magdalene Bridge to the Castle there's ne'er a dog will bark at that, Mr. Chisney—but Teddy Theed's got no punishment from them that should have given him his punishment. O Mr. Chisney, 'tis not what you or any respectable gentleman of the University pleases to do, that I would ever have said a word about—but when I thinks of the Papist, Mr. Chisney—when I thinks of that, as I was saying—O sir, my blood boils!—(here she tasted her own cordial)—when I thinks of a vile old Roman Antichrist Papish—when I thinks of *him* going for to dare to lift his hand to our Teddy Theed!—Oh! Mr. Chisney!"

Young Teddy, espying his opportunity, contrived, while his mother's glass was at her head, to sneak into another and obscurer part of the house. Old Teddy had also been on the watch, and he at the same moment broke in with such a voluminous speech about coats, waistcoats, breeches, &c., which he said it would be absolutely necessary for Mr. Dalton to have, that the good dame found herself quite cut out. She had *tact* enough, however, to perceive that the young gentlemen were more taken up with old Teddy's pattern-book than with young Teddy's pardonable and pardoned transgressions. Setting down the salver, therefore, upon the board, but carefully retaining possession of the bottle, she, in her turn, shuffled out of view, curtseying and simpering to vacancy, however, until she had got fairly beyond the threshold of the only apartment in those premises where her rule was ever disputed.

All proper or improper arrangements having been completed here and at some other shops, Chisney reconducted our hero to the gates of his College; and there he would have left him for the day, but his acquaintance, Dick Stukeley, one of the many most unstoical loungers at the porch, prevailed on the Christchurch man to promise that he would for once share the humble fare of * * * Hall, and spend the evening in his rooms, in company with the Westmoreland Freshman.

CHAPTER XX.

A SERIOUS DINNER AND A GAY SUPPER.

"FROM the days of Athenæus to those of Dr. Johnson," says the philosophic D'Israeli, "the pleasures of literature have ever been heightened by those of the table;" and indeed, long before I read the sentence, it had often struck me, that such a man as D'Israeli himself might compose a very edifying octavo 'On Books and Cooks, or the Connexion between the Love of Learning and the Love of Eating.' A great Encyclopædia 'Sale-Dinner' in the Row, by Cruikshanks, would certainly form the most appropriate of frontispieces.

Our ingenious and estimable "*detector curiositatum*" might begin with the ancients. The Mæonian has, from time immemorial, been christened "*Vinosus Homerus;*" but the delight with which he seizes upon every opportunity of singing solid dinners and savoury suppers, might have safely warranted an epithet of more extensive meaning. Pindar's charioteering heroes always go home to a smoking table, when the race is over; Euripides half tempts one to sympathise even with the barbarous raptures of the cannibal Polyphemus; the great Kitchener himself might borrow a thousand phrases depictive of the most fervid, and at the same time refined, gluttonous enjoyment from Aristophanes; Lucian cannot *allude* to such subjects—he pauses in his most aerial flight, and *expatiates;*—Nay, even Plato himself commences many of his most sublime 'Dialogues' with elaborate and *con amore* descriptions of the delicious shell-fish, which were consumed ere the conversation had leisure to flow.—It is the same with all the Romans worth mentioning. That man is little to be envied, who can read 'Horace' with a dry mouth; Cæsar, as Cicero commendingly observes, "*Post cœnam evomere solebat, ideoque largius edebat;*" Juvenal never denounces a luxury, until he has made one wish to have dined with the sumptuous subject of his satire; and as for Petronius, the most learned Petronius, does not that one simple, nervous, exquisite, and conclusive expression, "*Gula ingeniosa mihi et docta,*" show how well he merited to be reverenced as the "*Arbiter Elegantiarum,*" by the eating as well as the reading public of his elegant time?

The Spaniards have got the character of being the most abstemious of European peoples; but their books are enough to prove that this is quite a mistake. All their Vocabulary is saturated with an intense exalted spirit of gormandising, and every one must feel, upon the very threshold, how much more is ex-

pressed in their stately, solemn, and musical *golotoneria*, than in the coarse and cacophonous term which our own language has borrowed from it. In 'Lazarillo de Tormes,' there is a whole page upon one slice of bacon. The rigid and austere style of the author of 'Guzman d'Alfarache' is at once swelled and softened, when a luscious melon, or a cold partridge-pasty, is the theme. Cervantes, had he not been a keen lover of good things, could never have thrown so pathetic an interest over the abstracted dainties of the Governor of Barataria; doubtless his own soul breathes in the eloquent eulogies of the rich Camacho's wedding-feast, and still more so in Sancho's solitary adorations of the never-to-be-forgotten leveret-pie.—There are no entertainments on record more delicious than the little Florentine suppers sketched by Boccaccio and his followers. Berni is more than himself, when he paints the luxury of eating a nice dish *alone* and *in bed;* and whenever there is a tid-bit in 'Ariosto,' it seems to refresh himself as much as his heroes.—What ideas of passionate ecstatic devouring does not the very name of Rabelais recall! Molière — that name, too, is enough. A weekly dinner at M. Conrart's was the origin of the 'Academie Française'! Le Sage (see Dr. King's 'Anecdotes') was the most delicate of epicures. The whole of the French literature of the last age is woven through and through with *petits soupers*, as well as *petites maisons*. Fontenelle, when his friend, who liked butter to his asparagus, fell down in an apoplexy just as dinner was announced, ran, "the first thing," to the head of the stair-case, and screamed, "*toute a l'huile!—toute a l'huile!*" The suppers of Julie and St. Preux are as *voluptuous* as any other incidents in their history; and yet imagination yields the *pas* to fond memory, where Rousseau confesses those with which the Warens nurtured himself,—

> "When first he sighed in woman's ear,
> The soul-felt flame,
> And blushed at every sip to hear
> The one loved name."

It is no matter of what sort the eatable that is dwelt upon may be. The principle is safe when Goethe's Charlotte spreads the bread and butter—when Schiller's Wolff raves about the fried tripe of the Banditti — when the enormous boar smokes with half his bristles about him on the table of Biorn the One-eyed in 'Sintram'—but indeed, as for these Germans, it would be quite absurd to go into any particulars about them. Their whole ideas are penetrated and suffused with the fumes of fat things; and their language has as many affectionately accurate and precise epithets to denote the charms of individual greasy dishes, as ever were invented by the poets of any other nation under the inspiration of almighty Love himself. Nor, to say the truth, are we ourselves much better than our Teutonic kindred. From Chaucer to Burns gulosity floats buoyant on the British Castalie. We are more especially rich in songs about good eating. There is more true serious nature in "Great chieftain of the pudding race," than in fifty "Alexander's *feasts*," where not one single dish is immortalised. Butler died for want of the thing he liked best in the world—a dinner. Pope's great favourite was a veal cutlet, with lemon sauce, stewed in a silver pan. Swift endured all the Achesons on account of my lady's having a good cook;—even the homely legs of mutton and turnips at poor Sheridan's, are described by him in a tone of unusual tenderness. Thomson borrowed more from Berni than 'The Castle of Indolence,' for he was fond of eating in bed, and always did so when visited by the Muse. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu says, that Fielding's spirits could at any time be raised from the lowest depths of melancholy by the sight of a venison-pasty; and accordingly all his heroes are gourmands; —the cold round of Upton beef takes precedence of Mrs. Waters with Tom Jones; and Parson Adams is as fond of stuffing as Parson Trulliber. I should suspect that the author of 'Guy Mannering,' the 'Antiquary,' and 'Nigel,' is fond of grouse soup, friars' chicken, and cockey-leekie—and to jump at a conclusion, where nature and art have made none, John Wilkes—the "dog," the "rascal," the "scoundrel" John Wilkes — won Samuel Johnson's heart, by helping him to the brown part of Mr. Strahan's roasted veal. In fact, there is something in the substantial nature of eating that has always harmonised in the most perfect manner with the character of English Genius. Our literature is that of an eminently dining nation—it is such as beseems a people accustomed in all its transactions to consider a sirloin as the *sine quâ non* — whose hypocrites cannot harangue, whose dupes cannot subscribe, whose ministers do not consult, and whose assassins scarcely dream of stabbing—elsewhere than at a dinner. The ruling passion is strong even in our superstitions.—A seductive steam rises from the cauldron of a British Witch—and the ghosts of other people are contented with ruined houses, churchyards, and solitary midnight—but with us they are not scared by bells or chandeliers—they beard laughter and lackeys, and "push" supping usurpers "from their stools."

But the last and most consummate union of the love of cooks and letters was reserved for that "little, plump, round oily man of God," the Reverend Thomas Frognall Dibdin. His 'Tour' should have been called "Daitographical" as well as "Bibliographical;" for it is at least as full of rich dishes as of rare editions. He dallies in the same style with *dindon* and duodecimos—he fondles folios and fowls with equal fervour. He describes an Aldus as if it were an Omelet, an Omelet

as if it were an Aldus. We hear of a "crisp fifteener" in the one page, and of a "crisp *fricassee*" in the other. His admiration hesitates between Caxton and Kitchener—between Valdarfer and Very. And when, on leaving Paris, he gave a dinner at his favourite restaurateur's to a dozen of the primest French Bibliomaniacs, an illuminated representation of old Wynken de Worde gleamed behind the chair of the Amphytrion Eruditus, and every flask of Chambertin on the festal board was flanked by "AN UNCUT EDITIO PRINCEPS."

Yet it is perhaps in the descriptions of his visits to some of the old monasteries on the Danube, that his double enthusiasm is at the highest pitch. He arrives, *un beau matin*, within view of the Convent of MÖLK—he breakfasts leisurely at the foot of the hill on which it stands—he ascends and delivers his credentials—he is conducted by the hospitable fathers through all their venerable cloisters, and is at length received beneath the vaulted roof of their library. With what a flow of eloquence does he retrace the beautiful illuminated MSS., the *Libri Rarissimi*, the unique etchings and wood-cuts, the peerless missals! Suddenly the clock strikes twelve, and the *Frater Bibliothecarius* whispers, "Dinner!"—Instantly springs up a new, but kindred train of recollections—the hasty walk to the refectory, the antique splendour of that noble hall, the assembled brethren, the presiding Abbot, the solemn Grace, the beautiful boar's-head, the bursting haunch, the long-necked cob-webbed bottles, the tall old glasses with arsenic ornaments within the stalk, the balmy Johannisberg, the mild Markbrunner, the heavenly Hockheimer, the friendly ring of the saluting bumpers, the joyous stave of the old chaplain, the crafty bargain about the Boccaccio negotiated *inter pocula*, the western sun staining with admonitory glories the painted window over against the successful negotiator, the sudden half-sorrowful, half-ecstatic departure.—There is a life and truth about the whole affair that must send their charm into every bosom, and force, even from the man that prefers a book to a title-page, a momentary echo of,

"I should like to dine with this Nongtong-paw."

His animated view of what a dinner *is* at Mölk, may furnish one, it is probable, with no inadequate notion of what a dinner *was*, in the good olden time, beneath the long dismantled arches of our own Sweetheart, or St. Alban's. The external features of an old English monastery are still perceived in our academical *hospitia*, but, alas! a dinner there is now shorn of much of its fair proportion, and presents, at the best, but a faint and faded image of the "glories of eld."

Enough, nevertheless, of the ancient form and circumstance is still preserved, to impress, in no trivial measure, the imagination of him who, for the first time, is partaker in the feast—and it was so with our hero. The solemn bell, sounding as if some great ecclesiastical dignitary were about to be consigned to mother earth—the echoing vestibule—the wide and lofty staircase, lined with servingmen so old and demure that they might almost have been mistaken for so many pieces of grotesque statuary—the hall itself, with its high lancelot windows of stained glass, and the brown obscurity of its oaken roof—the yawning chimneys with their blazing logs—the long narrow tables—the elevated dais—the array of gowned guests—the haughty line of seniors seated in stall-like chairs, and separated by an ascent of steps from the younger inmates of the mansion—the Latin grace, chaunted at one end of the hall, and slowly rechaunted from the other—the deep silence maintained during the repast—the bearded and mitred visages frowning from every wall—there was something so antique, so venerable, and withal so novel in the whole scene, that it was no wonder our youth felt enough of curiosity, and withal, of a certain sort of awe, to prevent him for once from being able to handle his knife and fork quite *à là Roxburgher*.

These feelings, of course, were not partaken by the rest of the company, least of all, by the senior and more elevated portion of it. The party at "The High Table" of * * *, was as usual an active, and, as it happened on this day, it was by no means a small one. Red faces grew redder and redder as the welcome toil proceeded—short fat necks were seen swelling in every vein, and ears half-hid by luxuriant periwigs could not conceal their voluptuous twinklings; vigorously plied the elbows of those whose fronts were out of view; the ceaseless crash of mastication waked the endless echoes of the vaulted space over-head; and airy arches around mimicked and magnified every gurgle of every sauce-bottle. The stateliness of the ceremonial, and the profoundness of the general silence all about, gave to what was, after all, no more than a dinner, something of the dignity of a festival—I had almost said something of the solemnity of a sacrifice. A sort of reverend zeal seemed to be gratified in the clearing of every platter, and the purple stream of a bumper descended with the majesty of a libation.

In the Under-graduates' part of the hall, the feast was, of course, less magnificent; and among them the use of wine is altogether prohibited—a distinction, on this occasion, sufficiently galling, considering how incessantly they were passed by the manciple bearing decanters to the superior region. But the dinner itself was no sooner over than the fellows rose from their chairs, and another Latin thanksgiving having been duly chaunted, descended in solemn procession from their pride of place, and followed the guidance of

the manciple, who, strutting like a Lord Mayor's beadle, marshalled the line of march to the common room. Thither no non-graduate eye might follow the learned phalanx—there, might no profane ear catch the echo of their whispered wisdom.

The moment they were supposed to be beyond reach of ear-shot, there arose as loud a gabble as if publicans and sinners had, by a *coup-de-main*, taken absolute possession of The Temple—leaping, dancing, shouting in every direction—whistling, sparring, wagering, wrestling—a Babel of Babels!

This, however, was but for a few minutes, until the servants had removed the fragments, and were at liberty to quit the hall along with their masters. By that time they had all made up their parties for the evening—all but a few pensive and disappointed lingerers by the fire-side—and, in the midst of an universal dispersion, Chisney and Reginald were conducted to the apartments of Mr. Stukeley, where copious preparations had already been made for the entertainment of a numerous, but select company, of bachelors and under-graduates.

Mr. Stukeley's rooms were among the most spacious in the College, and being a young man of considerable fortune, he had furnished them in a style of rather more expensive elegance than is common in the place. There was no want of handsome sofas and hangings; a very pretty collection of classics occupied one end of the parlour; and over the mantelpiece were suspended some comely prints—a mezzotinto of Dr. Parr in the "μεγα θαυμα"—the *Chapeau de Paille* for the *pendant*—and in the centre, between the Beauty and the Bluebeard, a whole-length of The Game Chicken, peeled and attitudinising. A tasteful enough dessert graced the table, and strong rough port, "the liquor of men," the long-established potation of High-Church, was soon circulating with rapidity, and exerting all its potent influences among these future champions of orthodoxy.

There long prevailed a notion that old battered soldiers were worth double their weight of young and inexperienced ones in the blaze of battle; yet all history was against the absurdity. Hannibal's iron-faced Carthaginians beat the Roman veterans at Cannæ, and were afterwards demolished by recruits. At Pharsalia, it went much the same way; and Tilly's "rough old lads," as De Foe calls them, could scarcely stand for ten minutes against the beardless and blooming warriors of the Swede. In our own day, too, both Napoleon and Wellington have confirmed *the truth*. The Austrian chivalry were checked by French *boys* at Leipsig; and Waterloo was gained by heroes who had, for the most part, never heard before, and who, thanks to their own prowess, are not likely to have any future opportunities of hearing, the music of Charles XII.

A similar, and equally ridiculous, "vulgar error" about drinking, ought, without farther delay, to be exposed and exploded. From eighteen to two-and-twenty, is the prime of a man's life, so far as the bottle is concerned. There are, to be sure, many and illustrious exceptions. We do meet every now and then with a stout Septuagenarian—a hoary doctor of divinity who would as soon dream of flying as of flinching, a pillar of the Church whom no doze can shake—"a reverend old man, full of years," who could, at any time, either over the pulpit or the punch-bowl, lay fifty Edinburgh Reviewers on their backs. In like manner, among squires, and among farmers, and more frequently still, among led captains and Highland chiefs, the drinking faculty is occasionally retained at least as long as any other. But these are but the exceptions to a great general rule. Poll the island over, and I fear not to assert, that nine out of every ten men, at the lowest calculation, will give their votes in favour of the youthful toper. Perhaps in his case, as well as in the parallel one of the young soldier, the very ignorance of the danger may be in some measure the source of its repulsion. But in both cases, the chief part of the praise is due to nothing but youth, glorious YOUTH itself. Elastic spirits, light hearts, and untouched nerves, go far in either feat; and the dancing, boiling blood of the raw hero, does not sustain him more triumphantly amidst the smoke of his first field, than a firm, sound, unseasoned, and unbilified stomach does the young Bacchanalian at his initiatory symposium.

Accordingly, these young collegians acquitted themselves in a manner that perhaps no committee of the CAPUT, however venerable for years and erudition, could have rivalled. The old laws of potation were enforced rigidly, and, for the most part, obeyed without a murmur. Two words of Latin cost the unfortunate person from whose lips they had slipped a bumper, and a single word of Greek incurred the same penalty; but if the classical transgressor had exceeded these limits, he was compelled to expiate his offence by emptying a half-pint cup, fashioned in silver after the image of a fox's head; and, finally, if he failed to do this at a single pull, that sin of sins was sconced in the same measure of salt and water. Such delinquencies, however, were rare. Steady hands filled the brimming glasses—light and happy hearts prompted toast and song—gaily, freely, carelessly, kindly did they talk, and Reginald said to himself, a thousand and a thousand times over, that he had at length found the terrestrial Elysium.

A few of the young gentlemen quitted the party when the chapel-bell rung for evening prayers, but the chairman took good care that Reginald should guess nothing of their errand. They returned when service was over, and duly drank, with perilous rapidity,

as many bumpers as had passed round the table in their absence; and, in short, the blackstrap was plied without intermission, until the announcement of supper, which, that no time might be lost in trifles, had been served up in the adjoining apartments of one of Mr. Stukeley's company.

A small barrel of pickled oysters—some brawn, veined with more exquisite red and white than ever beautified a slab of Anglesea marble—and sausages, such as Oxford alone can produce [for though a Christina lectured at Pisa, no Dorothy ever cooked at Bologna]—these formed the simple repast; but the board was adorned with such a display of massive plate as might almost have reconciled one to the supper of the Barmecide. It has been, time out of mind, the custom at Oxford, for young gentlemen, in quitting the precincts of Alma Mater, to leave with the College which has nursed them, some memorial of their gratitude and affection, in the shape of cup, tankard, or flagon. In most Colleges, but especially in the few that were less distinguished for their loyal zeal in the time of Charles I., the accumulation of such vessels has, in the course of so many centuries, come to be immense. * * * College was one of these, and her butler had now loaded the private supper-table of an under-graduate with an array of *Doctors*, *Masters*, and *Scholars*,—for so, according to their several degrees of capacity, they are distinguished in the academical phraseology—such as might have done no dishonour to the side-board of any British Peer. Such a collection of College plate can scarcely be regarded without some interest; for the chances are, that every now and then the legend on the lid of the piece recalls the name and glory of some long-departed worthy of England; and here, as it happened, the gifts of one of the greatest of our modern heroes, and one of the greatest of our ancient poets, stood side by side upon the board—each of them—to quote Rochester, whose own huge D.D. is still the honour of Wadham—

> "So large that, fill'd with England's potion,
> Beer-billows to the brim,—
> Vast toasts in the delicious ocean,
> Like English ships might swim."

But although "mild ale" has often enough been celebrated as "the milk of good doctrine," by Tom Warton, and other bards of the Sausage School, such a beverage can never expect to be largely relished after the stomach has been saturated with the more pungent stimulants of cold port and hot chestnuts. Accordingly, Jem Brank, a pluralist, who had for thirty years enjoyed, among many other good things, the sole privilege of manufacturing Bishop for the sons of * * *, soon made his appearance with a most magnificent flagon of that never-to-be-resisted potation. Wine is mulled everywhere, but BISHOP is Oxonian, and Reginald, who had never tasted either *Pope* or *Cardinal*,* was compelled to acknowledge, without hesitation, its unrivalled claims. Mr. Brank, however, did not seem to have himself any higher predilection for Bishop, than a grocer usually entertains for figs, or a parson for sermons. Being invited, according to use and wont, to seat himself at a side-table and sing a song to the juvenile company, Jem preferred, for the associate of his separate board, what old Bishop Andrews so happily calls "the sprite of the buttery, a pot of good ale;" and under its inspiration, chaunted in a voice as rich, soft, and mellow as his theme—

> "When the chill Sirocco blows,
> And Winter tells a heavy tale,
> When pyes and daws, and rooks and crows,
> Do sit and curse the frosts and snows,
> Then give me ale," &c.

It may be taken for granted that the youthful members of the party did not leave all the music to the humble and hoary minister of their pleasures. Singing bars sconce; so that old Mapes's

> "Mihi est propositum in tabernâ mori,"

that ancestral canticle, which may, of itself, be sufficient to show how little Oxford life and manners have altered within the last six hundred years, was chaunted in full chorus, without the smallest animadversion, from the master of the feast. It was immediately followed by a boisterous strain, celebrating certain very recent achievements on Moulsey Hurst, as perhaps, in the very reverend Archdeacon's own day, it might have been by some ballad of joust or tournament. The elegant Harris of Salisbury boasts, indeed, with amiable *naïveté*, and perhaps not without more good sense than the scoffers of the age are likely to acknowledge, that, in regard to all great essentials, the English youth are educated beneath those venerable arcades *now*, very much in the same course of study which formed the minds of their forefathers many long centuries ago. But the style of their joviality, and the sources of their merriment, have, it is probable, undergone even more slender mutation during the same lapse of time. The change in spelling has been greater than the change of language—and I have no doubt, that should old Walter de Mapes arise suddenly from the grave, and take his seat in an Oxford common room tomorrow, he would find the subjects of George the Fourth almost as able, and quite as willing, to enjoy his good things as ever were those of Henry the Second. What a delightful meeting would it be, and how annihilative of Hallam!—What capital stories would he tell of knights, and archers, and abbots, and nuns, and minstrels; and what charming

* Port, mulled with roasted lemons, is BISHOP: Claret, similarly embellished, is CARDINAL: and Burgundy, POPE.

stories would he not hear in return about Captain Barclay and the Gasman—the Bishop of ——, Hannah More, and Sam Rogers! I am sure he would admit that Trafalgar and Waterloo were finer things than the acquisition of Anjou and Guienne; and how would he stare, when, after indulging him in a long prose about the conquest of the Lordship of Ireland, we came over him with a full narrative of the late royal visit to Dublin, and the enthusiasm of the Curragh! We should give him a Percival for his Becket, and a Bergami for his Rosamond. It is but charity to suppose, that the present occupier of his archdeaconry would be the first to acknowledge old Walter's prior claim. A handsome wig would mask all traces of the tonsure; and in the course of a few months, Dr. Mapes might rank among the brightest ornaments of The British Critic; and perhaps he might be found almost as well qualified for writing a Glossary of the old English as Dr. Nares himself.

But whatever might have been the case, had Walterus Redivivus been of the party, the rules of academical discipline were on the present occasion strictly enforced, and five minutes ere the clocks of Oxford struck twelve, Mr. Chisney, *nolens volens*, was expelled from * * *. His departure broke up the symposium; and Reginald, who, with the rest, had escorted him to the porch, was by this time so far gone, that, on his way back, he would have sworn *two* lamps were twinkling in Mr. Barton's window.

After blowing a sufficient quantity of asafœtida smoke through the key-hole of an obnoxious tutor's apartments, and piling a cart-load of coals or two against the gates of the College-chapel, the young * * *ites at length dispersed. But Reginald Dalton, various as the occurrences of the day had been, and sophisticated as some of his faculties certainly were, did not sleep for the first time in his monastic cell, without having bestowed more sighs than one on the yet undimmed image of Ellen Hesketh.

CHAPTER XXI.

A COSTLY RIDE.

THERE is perhaps no town in the world where the truth of the Wise Man's saying, "the thing that hath been is that also which shall be," is more regularly and continually receiving exemplification than in old Oxford. Dinner follows dinner in the same solemnity of observance; and for the most part, the evening is spent among the young men precisely in the same style with which Mr. Stukeley's party has made us acquainted.

Reginald Dalton commenced his career, as we have seen, with high purposes and resolutions of studious labour; and Mr. Barton had for several weeks the utmost reason to be satisfied with the progress he made, both in his classical and in his mathematical pursuits. Often, after leaving his tutor's apartment, did the young man repair to his own, with fresh determination to make his duty his pleasure, and resist the temptations which were continually thrown in his way, to end a well-spent day in idleness and dissipation. But seldom, very seldom, we must admit, did the hour, when the trial came, find him prepared for the struggle. To say truth, the natural quickness of his parts enabled Reginald, by a very little time spent over his books, to prepare himself abundantly for what his tutor expected from him next day. Barton, a great scholar, but by no means a quick man originally, judged only from what came under his notice at the hour of lecture, and comparing what Reginald had done with what he himself could have done at the same period of life, gave the youth easy credit for having passed in solitary labour the hours that had for the most part been devoted to the tennis-court, the rowing-match—above and after all, to those light-hearted circles, where the bottle and the flagon never ceased to hold their jovial rounds.

There can be no doubt, that, in many more ways than this, the peculiar habits and temper of Reginald's tutor were a great misfortune to our youth. That he was the most deeply-read man in all the College, was comparatively a small advantage, when those great acquirements were coupled with personal habits which prevented their possessor from knowing almost anything from other people about the way in which his pupil lived; and, what was still worse, with a shyness and reserve, the natural consequences of total seclusion, such as rendered it almost impossible that even the frankness of one originally disposed to make no secrets, should not have gradually become chilled and repressed under the influence of his presence. By degrees Reginald came to partake in those feelings of restraint, without which no one, for a long period of time, had ever been accustomed to approach this melancholy recluse; for once, a virtuous act (for such certainly was his original choice of Barton's tutorship) led directly and immediately to evil results; and he who, under the guidance of a less learned, but more accessible man, might have done very great things, did, in effect, but little; and, which was still more dangerous, was able to satisfy all but his own conscience in doing so. That indeed was a monitor which it was by no means so easy to lull; yet, alas! in evil as in good, power is progressive; and where is the conscience whose stings, even in their infinite variety, custom cannot stale?

The first time Reginald had a party at his own rooms, as is usual upon such occasions, a scene of much more than every-day excess took place. Mr. Chisney, and several other

out-College men, were present, and when that is the case, a species of rivalry is always sure to aggravate an Oxonian debauch. Among other things, there was a great deal of talk about fox-hunting, and Reginald found himself exposed, not only to surprise, but to something like derision, when he confessed that he had never been witness to that noblest of British sports. Two or three of the young men present were to ride to the cover at Newnham Harcourt early next morning, and meet Mr. Hooker's hounds; and upon Chisney's suggestion, Reginald was warmly pressed to join the party. He yielded after a little time the more readily, because Mr. Stukeley insisted on mounting him. Chisney, who had agreed to go also, despatched forthwith a message to secure his favourite hack, and the matter being thus arranged, conversation soon took another turn.

Unfortunately there occurred, towards the close of the evening, what is, to their honour be it spoken, a very rare thing indeed among these academical *roués*—a quarrel. Some hasty word led to a hot reply, and that to a fiery rejoinder; and the end was, that a glass of wine being thrown in one young man's face, he returned the compliment with a decanter. The madness of youth and wine then soared high above every restraint; and in spite of all that our hero could do to allay the ensuing tumult, it concluded only when twelve o'clock expelled the strangers. In the course of this violent scene, Frederick Chisney had been so extravagantly outrageous, that Reginald himself had been obliged to knock him down, to use Homer's illustration, "like an ox in the stall;" for one of the Fellows of * * * having come to the door, alarmed by the tempest of voices within, Mr. Frederick had not only received the reverend intruder with epithets of the most savage abuse, but had even exhibited such symptoms of more desperate rudeness, as had certainly most abundantly justified his youthful and comparatively sober host in taking what appeared to be the only effectual step for securing the safe exit of the Senior.

Although, however, Reginald was at the moment sober in comparison with Chisney, he had, in reality, drunk quite sufficiently to render his recollection of what had passed very confused the next morning. When he awoke, a hot and feverish thirst parched his lips, and when he essayed to rise, his brain reeled, and his eye swam in dizziness. By a sickly effort of strength he got up, and plunging his whole head into a basin of cold water, kept it there until every limb shook beneath the strong stimulus; and his faculties were in a great measure cleared, and his thoughts composed, by the time he had dried his hair. He drank long and largely, and feeling himself comparatively at ease, he opened his bed-room door, intending to seek for his watch, which he had not discovered in its usual situation. He opened the door—but with what horror did he shrink from the scene which met his view!—Tables overturned, chairs broken, gowns torn, and caps shattered—candlesticks planted prostrate in their own grease—bottles and glasses shivered to atoms—floods of wine soaking on the filthy floor—horrid heavy fumes polluting the atmosphere—utter confusion everywhere—and a couple of dirty drowsy scouts labouring among all the loathsome ruin of a yesterday's debauch.

Reginald turned in sickness from the abomination, and clapping the door behind him, flung himself upon his bed in an agony of shame and remorse. The image of his father rose before him—his father, far away in that virtuous solitude, robbing himself of what he could ill spare, that his son might not want the means of improvement, and cheering and sustaining his lonely hours with the hopes of meeting that only favourite improved in intellect, and uncorrupted in manners. The calm beautiful valley, the dear sequestered home, the quiet days, the cheerful nights, the happy mornings—all the simple images of the peaceful past came crowding over his fancy in the sad clearness of regret. Even now, he said to himself, even now, he of whom I shall never be worthy, his thoughts are upon me! Alas! how differently will his fond imagination picture the scene with which his son is surrounded! How little will he dream of frantic riot, mad debauchery, this idleness, this drunkenness, this degradation! His solitary pillow is visited with other dreams—dreams!—dreams indeed! O why came I hither?—why was I flung thus upon myself, ere I had strength enough to know myself—to know if it were but my weakness? Alas! my too kind, my too partial parent, how cruelly will he be undeceived! For him, too, I am preparing pain—pain and shame—and for what?—for fever, for phrenzy, for madness, for the laughter of fools, the merriment of idiots, the brawls, the squabbles of drunken boys—this hot and burning brain, these odious shivering qualms, this brutal giddiness, and all yon heart-oppressing pollution!

The first violences of self-reproach had scarcely had time to soften amidst new and equally violent resolutions of amendment, sobriety, and diligence, when his bed-room door was opened, and Frederick Chisney, and Dick Stukeley, both ready booted for the chase, burst in cracking their whips, and abusing him for his laziness. In vain did Reginald plead that he was ill, that he was sick, that he could not, should not, would not go. Neither would understand anything except that he had an aching head, and a disordered stomach, for both of which, they said, one good gallop was a better cure than all Dr. Ireland's gallipots. They opened Reginald's wardrobe, and tumbling every-

thing over, found an old green frock, which it was agreed would look tolerably knowing on a young rider, and a pair of white corduroys, against which, as they had come from Teddy Theed's hands but the day before, nobody could have said anything. In short, they *made* poor Reginald rise, and stood over him till the reluctant youth, vainly reproaching himself, and as vainly beseeching his companions, was equipped the best way his wardrobe permitted. Stukeley then dragged him to his own apartments, where he provided him with spurs and a whip, gave him a ribbon to tie his hat to his button-hole withal, and set him down to a smoking beef-steak with plenty of black pepper and mustard—which last application, it must be owned, did more for the stomach and the spirits of the patient, than anything the wisdom of the Faculty could have administered under such circumstances.

Stukeley had sent forward his horses some hours earlier, and provided a gig, in which he gave Reginald a seat to Newnham. The gig became a tandem the moment it was beyond the Proctor's jurisdiction, and gaily they bowled along, Chisney sometimes trotting his hack by their side, and sometimes lost to their view among the many groups of juvenile sportsmen with which the road was garnished.

There is nothing in which the young sinners of a debauch have so decidedly the better of the old ones, as in the facility with which their unshattered constitutions enable them to shake off the painful part of its immediate consequences. I say the PAINFUL part—because really, when the sickness and the headache are gone, the feverish fervour which remains about the brain, is with them neither a pain nor a punishment. A sort of giddy reckless delirium lies there, ready to be revived and rekindled by the mere winds of heaven; and, in fact, when such excitements as air and exercise are abundantly applied, a sort of legacy of luxury is bequeathed to them, even by their departed carousal; and it is in this point of view only, I apprehend, that any charitable person will ever interpret old Tom Brown's glorious chaunt of

> "Wine, wine in the morning
> Makes us frolic and gay,
> That like eagles we soar
> In the pride of the day."

Alas! such things are very agreeable while they last; but repetition is annihilative of that perilous joy, and ere long the young debauchee suffers the same penalty as those who have gone before him. In the mean time, however, this precious inheritance was enjoyed by our youths—ay, even by Reginald Dalton himself, in spite of all the doleful meditations that had attended his waking—as they proceeded through that beautiful country—for even in December it was beautiful—a fine healthful breeze fanning their cheeks—the sky clear azure, with here and there light drifting grey clouds overhead—prancing horses and gay horsemen before and behind—red jackets glancing and gleaming everywhere—neigh echoing neigh—and whistle responding to whistle, from

> "Buggy, gig, and dog-cart,
> Curricle and tandem."

The common where the hounds were to cast off, presented a scene, if possible, still more varied and lively, and enlivening. Reginald was quite astounded with the numbers of the sportsmen who were lounging about the edge of the furze, some on horseback, the greater part dismounted, all waiting in anxious expectation of Mr. Hooker's arrival. Old Tom Smith, the huntsman, stood in the midst of his dogs cracking his whip, flapping his arms, and every now and then cursing the delay in whispers, not loud, but deep. Around him were gathered a dozen or two of the hot-headed young academicians, distinguished, by their scarlet frocks, from the rural squirearchy of the hunt; for these, Mr. Hooker being a clergyman, wore parson's-grey, in compliment to the professional costume which he necessarily brought with him even into the hunting-field. At length, after perhaps twenty minutes suspense, whispers of, "the venerable," "the venerable," "here comes the venerable Hooker," passed from group to group. Tom Smith, doffing his upper Benjamin, bestrode his pawing bay; the whining dogs, with erected ears, seemed conscious of the master's approach; and Parson Hooker trotted briskly into the midst of the expectants, mounted on a beautiful roan, well worthy of dividing with his lord the attention of the field, and the honours of the advent.

The venerable Hooker himself was, nevertheless, no despicable representative of a once-numerous breed of churchmen, now, it is to be feared, sorely on the decline, and which, ere another age passes over us, may not improbably be quite extinct. There being both a good estate and a good living in the family, he, a second son, had been destined from infancy for the rectory; but he had scarcely been inducted into the benefice ere his elder brother died, so that a double burden of cares had, during the last five-and-thirty years, reposed on his shoulders. These, though not broad, were stout, and the Rector-Squire now looked at sixty as gay an old fellow as if he had been a younger brother all his days. A little red face, red all over, but reddest about the nose,

> "If nose it might be called which was no nose,"

or at least one of the most diminutive specimens that ever formed the handle of a Christian physiognomy—a pair of small sharp grey eyes—a beautiful set of teeth, continually exposed—a rough black beard—a tight shape, encumbered, however, by something that, had

the man and his appurtenances been on a larger scale, would have been called a pot-belly—thin nervous shanks—a stature of barely five feet—well made and better worn top-boots—spruce buckskin breeches—a dark-grey frock, with black-paper buttons—and a shovel-hat, with a suitable rose in front. Imagine all these little particulars, and, as Gil Blas says, "*Voila mon oncle!*" A dapper curate, and a couple of stylish grooms, formed the "personal escort," or "tail," of this ecclesiastical chief.

Both Chisney and Stukeley had often hunted with the jolly parson before, so that Reginald was introduced and welcomed without difficulty. "Ah! Hooker," cried one of the squirearchy, "what think ye of to-day, Hooker? What a capital sermon that was you gave us, Hooker! D—n me, 'twill lie to a certainty, Hooker——" But Mr. Hooker had no leisure for compliments; two or three old good ones were in a twinkling deep in the furze—and Tom Smith and the Rector—for no one else stirred—had work enough on their throats. A melodious roar from Sackbut, ere long, brought "Hark, hark!" from the confident divine. Cymbal, Shalm, and Psaltery joined instantaneously in the "musical din." Exactly at eleven o'clock Reynard broke cover, and away, away went priest and layman, squire, curate, bachelor, and freshman—a beautiful field of at least threescore—away over bush and furze, bog and briar, hedge and stile, ditch and double ditch—away over turf and fallow, sand, clay, and gravel—away, away, away,

> "Tramp, tramp across the stubble,
> Splash, splash across the dubble."

All other lunacy is stoicism compared to it. The very breeze seemed on fire. Intellect, quickened to intuition, distinguished not the leap from the gallop—every member felt the kindling stream of an all-subduing, all-overwhelming inspiration:—the heart that had never glowed before glowed now, and that which had ever glowed, oh! how did it burn within the bosom! The world had been a shadow—life had never been joy, passion, rapture, ecstacy, till now.

Our hero really acquitted himself upon this occasion in a style worthy of the name. The music of hound and horn (for that last noble accompaniment of the English chase had not been banished from Parson Hooker's establishment, as has been too frequently the case of late), these had not merely excited, they had maddened him. Utterly careless, utterly fearless, the boy dashed at everything, and was baulked by nothing. From the beginning, he had sense enough to make The Venerable his guide; and, thanks to that sagacious determination, Reginald, after the chase had lasted for a couple of hours, and after almost all the academical red-coats, Stukeley among the rest, had lost themselves amidst woods and windings, found himself galloping in the still unbaffled van, Reynard, for the second time, full in view, at the distance of a few fields, and the greater part of the pack in full cry behind him. The despairing animal made now at last for Isis, and Reginald was one of the very few who dared the wintry stream without hesitation. Poor Reynard, miserably wearied as he was, contrived to gain the hill, and made right for Bagley wood, hound and horseman considerably distanced. On pushed the resolute youth—a wide ditch, or rather stream, with a high stony bank, threw back for a moment even the parson himself; but Reginald, ignorant of the danger, spurred on, and his noble steed flung himself freely, with a desperate effort. The chest met the rough high bank, and the fine animal, who had miscalculated his distance, snapped his spine in the cause. Reginald was found, after a time, quite senseless on the bank, and when the boy recovered himself, guess his horror when he heard the worthy Rector issuing to his huntsman the humane and unavoidable mandate, to ride to the nearest house, and bring a gun to put the noble creature out of pain.

Ere then the fox had met his fate, so that, as soon as this, which could not be deferred, was done, our youth found all about him (they were not many) ready to disperse, and take their departure homewards. Parson Hooker, bestowing a thousand commendations, calling him a good one, a right one, and I know not by how many affectionate epithets besides, invited him to mount one of his servants' horses, and go home with him to Sidlingham. But Reginald's phrenzied vein of gladness had been effectually exhausted; he felt his body wearied and bruised, and the accident which had befallen his friend's favourite horse, while in his keeping, was of itself sufficient to call up more melancholy and uneasy thoughts than his philosophy could easily enable him to master. He resisted, therefore, all the kind Hooker's entreaties, and would accept of nothing, except a guide to the highway. A sudden thought struck him, however, after the parson had ridden to some little distance, and the boy ran after him with a swiftness which, the moment before, he should not have imagined himself to be capable of exerting. His object was only to ask from the parson a promise, that neither he nor any of his people would mention anything of what had happened; and this there was no difficulty of obtaining, although some surprise was testified when the request was made known. Once more a friendly farewell was exchanged, and Reginald, rejoining the country boy who had been retained as his guide, gained ere long, although proceeding as yet at a pace of no great briskness, an eminence, from which he could see not only the line of the Abingdon road, but the towers and domes of Oxford rising distinctly at some few miles' distance from the plain below.

Reginald walked down the hill, and onwards through the woods of Bagley, with a heart full of heaviness, but, at the same time, in spite both of exhausted spirits and of much bodily fatigue, with the firm and unflagging steps of one who feels that he has that before him which must be done. The conflict of busy thoughts within, kept him almost unconscious of anything that was passing without and around him ; and it was with surprise, more than any other feeling, that he at length found himself upon the bridge of Isis, and at the threshold of the city, which had, as it seemed to him but a very short time before, appeared a far-off object upon the verge of the horizon.

Dinner was over in the hall of * * *, and Reginald, after swallowing a hasty morsel in his room, made it his first business to discover where Stukeley was. Being informed that he had gone to spend the evening with Mr. Chisney, our youth immediately changed his dress, and putting the good Squire of Grypherwast's purse, and all the money he was master of, in his pocket, proceeded to join his friends at Christ-Church.

By whatever effort he might have obtained such command over himself, he entered Chisney's apartments with an air and aspect of perfect gaiety. The young men of whom the party consisted, had all been at the cover that morning ; but, at different stages of the chase, they had, without exception, been thrown out, and they were, at the moment when he made his appearance, busied in a thousand conjectures as to the issue of the field, and the further progress of the freshman, whose bold riding at the commencement of the day had so much excited their admiration.

Reginald was, of course, at no great loss to satisfy their curiosity as to all the particulars of the chase ; and when he had detailed them to an end, he, and the horse which had carried him, were equally the subjects of much applause. The boy, after listening to them for a time in silence, struck gaily into their tone, and, to the no small astonishment of Chisney, declared that he had never known what pleasure was until he had seen a fox-chase ; that he was resolved to hunt henceforth regularly twice a-week during the season, and that he would gladly give a long price to be master of such a horse as that which had enabled him to cut so respectable a figure at his *début*. Dick Stukeley, who liked nothing so well as a horse, except only the pleasure of making a bargain about one, was not slow to perceive his drift. He would not have parted with Dinah Gray, he said, no, not for the world, to any other man ; but really Dalton had shown off Dinah, and Dinah had shown off Dalton to so great advantage, that he should consider it shabby to stand in the way of a more permanent connection. In short, after a great deal of bush-hunting, Mr. Stukeley at last named his price—and truly no very modest one that was. Reginald caught him at the word, however, counted out the money upon the instant, and returned into his pocket one of the lightest purses that ever kept a heavy heart company.

The deed, however, being fairly done, the spirits which a resolved purpose had sustained, began, ere long, to sink far beyond the reach of bumpers. After an hour or so had elapsed, Reginald declared he felt himself so much knocked up with the day's exertions, that he must needs go home to his bed. Stukeley, and some other stronger men who had gone through less work than he, ridiculed him a little for this unworthy manner of terminating a day so glorious ; but the freshman had earned some respect among them all by his horsemanship, and their expostulations were not continued when it was found that he was quite in earnest.

To complete poor Reginald's misery, when he reached his own rooms again, a letter from his father was lying for him upon the table. He thrust it away from him at first—but opened it after a time, and read with dim eyes enough to add new keenness to every wound in his bosom. Every kind word—every tender affectionate idea—was gall and wormwood. But when he came to read of the high hopes with which Mr. Barton's letters had inspired the good man, of the praises which had been bestowed on himself, his diligence, his ardour, his regularity — then indeed he could stand it no longer. Another letter was also lying on his table ; he was not acquainted with the hand-writing, and, disgusted with himself, and with all the world, he opened it with listless fingers, not dreaming that it could contain anything capable of interesting him. The inclosure was, however, a very kind note from old Keith. The good Priest said in it, that he had called at Mr. Dalton's rooms, and found him from home—that the object of his visit had been to ask if his young friend would partake of a quiet dinner with him the next day. "It is Christmas day," said he, "and as you have no relations of your own here, you will scarcely know what to do with yourself." Little did the old Priest know of the course of life in which Reginald was engaged—least of all did he suspect that Christmas day is at * * * the merriest in all the year. However, as it happened, our youth was in a mood to prefer anything to such a scene as, from all he had heard, a College *Gaudy* was like to be ; and Reginald wrote, without hesitation, his acceptance of the invitation. Having done so, he extinguished his light, and never sat deeper and more painful sadness on the pillow of youth—and, after all that has occurred, we may still say, of innocence.

CHAPTER XXII.

A QUIET CHRISTMAS.

REGINALD arose very early the next morning —still melancholy and dejected, but cooled and calmed from the first fever of self-reproach which had burned upon his brow over-night. The Chapel bell was already ringing, and he resolved to be present at the morning service —a duty which, among others, he had for several weeks very much neglected.

There had been a considerable fall of snow during the night, and at that early hour nothing could be more dreary than the dim quadrangle below, and the damp echoes of the cloister along which he had to walk. But when he entered the Chapel, though all was solemnity, there was nothing of dreariness in the scene. According to the custom of that sacred season—a custom derived no doubt from the primitive ages of Christianity, and still appealing, in every uncorrupted bosom, to a thousand delightful feelings of our nature —the little Chapel was everywhere adorned with green branches, and those bright glossy leaves and berries, amidst the light of the tapers, and the thrilling notes of the organ blended something of the placid, and even of the cheerful, with emotions of a deeper and a more awful character.

The majesty of the service itself came sweetened to the ear by the music of so many young voices ; and ancient as the edifice was, there was enough, in whatever direction the eye might be turned, to recall the idea that it was for the purposes of young devotion its venerable altar had been reared. Young faces and young voices were all around, and the walls above were loaded with the funereal mementos of departed youth. Here the cold sepulchral marble preserved the shadow of manhood cut short but the year before, in its first opening bloom of promise—and there perhaps the faint beams of morning, struggling through the deep colours of a window, glimmered upon the heraldic ensigns of some juvenile inmate, whose grateful piety had centuries before bequeathed the rich blazonry.

" 'Sweet is the holiness of youth,' so felt
Time-honour'd Chaucer, when he framed the lay,
By which the Prioress beguiled the way,
And many a pilgrim's rugged heart did melt."

As Reginald knelt here amidst the memorials of the dead, and joined his voice in the solemn responses of the living, a breath of peace and comfort seemed to be wafted into his soul, and he retired, when the service was over, to his solitary chamber, full not only of the same virtuous resolves which he had brought with him, but restored, in a great measure, to that equal and placid frame of mind, in the absence of which the best resolutions are but the arrows of a trembling hand, grasped indeed with a convulsive energy, but soon lost in vain efforts, or dropped in the vainer listlessness of despair.

Reginald locked himself in his room, and having no occasion to attend his tutor on a holiday, devoted the solitary hours of his morning to more serious study than he had for a long time been much acquainted with. In vain came twenty thundering knocks to his door—in vain did Stukeley, Chisney, and many more of his gay associates, strain their voices in screaming to him through his key-hole ; he resisted every art and every violence, and, busied among his books and papers, enjoyed every laborious hour more than that which had gone before it. What plans did he sketch out for himself—how minutely did he mark the occupations of months to come —how triumphantly did he sum up the results of his future diligence—how tenderly did he contemplate the pleasure with which he should meet his dear father, after having executed all that he now promised to himself !—He had had for some days a little College exercise in Latin verse to prepare, and now, his spirits quickened and sustained by all the buoyancy of youthful hope and ambition, the task, which he had deferred longer than he should have done, seemed, when fairly grappled withal, to have been a luxury neglected. With what delight did he walk up and down his room, repeating a dozen sonorous hexameters when they were finished ! Smile not, gentle reader, he was but a boy ; and Buffon, the great Buffon, in the fulness of years and honours, confessed that he knew no earthly pleasure so great, as stalking at evening beneath a favourite row of elms, and declaiming to himself the paragraphs which he had spent the morning in elaborating.

His labours being completed, while all the courts of * * * were resounding with the notes of festive preparation, our youth made his escape unnoticed, and walked swiftly over the snow to the suburb of St. Clement's. The sun had just gone down, and Ellen Hesketh was at the parlour window when he approached the house. She opened it, and bade him turn ere he entered, and look for a moment at the scene which she had been contemplating. He did so, and enjoyed it not the less, surely, because her fine eyes were partakers in the beauty which lay beneath his view. The western sky, yet bright with the richest crimson, had diffused a tint soft and brilliant as that of virgin rose-leaves over the hills, while the wide plain below slept in uniform and dazzling whiteness. Between him and the gorgeous sunset, the stately groves of Oxford stood tall and black, while outlines of gold and amethyst graced every slender pinnacle and minaret, and spire and dome, that reared itself above them against the glowing horizon. The great bell of Christ-Church was heard distinctly

" Swinging slow its solemn roar"—

over tower and tree, and a host of humbler

belfries joined one by one in the cathedral note.

"Hark!" said Ellen, "how grand is the effect of that simplest of all harmonies!"

"Grand indeed!" quoth Reginald—"and what a scene of beauty!"

Miss Hesketh sighed very deeply, and the boy, almost unconscious of what he was saying, said, "What is there to make you melancholy in the sight of such a sunset?"

The girl blushed, and was silent for a moment, and then said, more as if to herself than to him, "When I look down on all these spires and domes, and hear so many bells ringing, I could almost think I was in Fulda, dear Fulda, once again—if it were not for the want of the Forest. But, ah me, I shall never see Fulda again, nor walk among the old woods that I loved so well!"

"You regret the scenes of earlier days," said Reginald.

"Ay, Mr. Dalton," she answered; "and who would not regret them? But why should I speak thus to *you?* you have never seen Fulda, nor the Rhine, nor Germany, my country."

"Nay, Miss Hesketh, you must not call that your country, even though you love it so well. You are English, and this is England."

"I am not English, Mr. Dalton, and this is not my country;—but come away, for I hear my uncle, and he will be ready for his dinner."

Reginald with this entered the house, the door of which Miss Hesketh, with her own hand, opened to him—the only domestic they entertained being busied in the kitchen. The good priest joined them the next moment—the curtains were drawn close, the fire stirred, and the candles lighted, and in a few minutes a neat but plentiful board was ready for their reception. A dumb waiter did the duty of a servant more agreeably than any servant can ever do in so small a party; and the two young people were equally gratified when they had any opportunity of making themselves useful to the kind old gentleman, who had, to say truth, been a good deal fatigued by the voluminous services of a Catholic Christmas-day. His spirits, however, carried no trace of weariness, and when the board was cleared, and they had drawn their chairs round the fire-side, Ellen fetched him his pipe, and he was as gay as a lark. "Now, my dear lassie," he said, "put down a bottle of the Rhine wine that came from Hartwell, and we'll let Mr. Dalton taste a glass or two, ere we call on you for the guitar and the Rhine song."

While Ellen was fetching the precious flask which the knowing priest had planted some hours before in the snow, he explained to Reginald that he had been visiting, the week before, the Count de Lisle (now Louis XVIII.), then resident in the next county to Oxfordshire, and that his Majesty had been so kind as to have his post-chaise filled when he departed with some of that dear German luxury, which he could now very ill afford to purchase for himself. Reginald, it may be supposed, did not relish the rich Rudelsheimer at all the less, because it had come from the cellars of a Prince and a Bourbon; but perhaps he filled his green glass with yet increased devotion, after hearing from the lips of Ellen Hesketh that splendid song, which the Genius of Haydn has made almost the "God Save the King" of Germany

"The Rhine! the Rhine! be blessings on the Rhine!
St. Rochus bless the land of love and wine,
Its groves, and high-hung meads, whose glories shine
In painted waves below:
Its rocks, whose topaz beam betrays the vine,
Or richer ruby glow;
The Rhine! the Rhine! be blessings on the Rhine!
Beats there a sad heart here, pour, pour the wine!" &c.

Miss Hesketh's voice was one of those which cannot give utterance even to a strain of festivity, without investing it with such a depth of feeling as is always answered by emotions, serious to the verge at least of melancholy. Whoever has heard that melody, even from a very indifferent performer, will acknowledge that a certain sorrowfulness is mingled in its flow; and to Reginald's ear, now for the first time receiving it, it sounded far more like the expression of regret for a lost country, than that of exultation in one possessed and enjoyed. The chief beauty of the voice consisted in the trembling richness of its very low notes; and while she sung, her eye swam with a liquid enthusiasm, kindling at once and saddening.—Her cheeks, very pale in general, caught from the excitement a momentary flush, so exquisitely delicate in brilliancy, that no other hue in animate or inanimate nature could be compared to it; and that again, the instant she paused, passed away like a cloud, leaving the living marble as white as ever. Reginald's gaze, quite unconscious of its steadfastness, called back, after a moment's interval, a yet deeper rush of blood into her fair cheek; and the boy blushed too, and dropped his own eye-lids with confusion still more painful than that his untutored glance had excited. But the good priest had filled the glasses, which he taught our youth the true German method of ringing against each other for the pledge, and the old man's quiet gaiety soon restored the young people to all their self-possession.

Ellen, after a little while, left the gentlemen to themselves, and Mr. Keith conversed in a fatherly manner with Reginald about his college, his pursuits, his occupations. The young man, his heart rejoicing in the opportunity of opening itself, told him very fairly,

that he found it a very difficult thing to fix himself upon his studies in a place where he was so much surrounded with temptations to idleness—that hitherto he had yielded to these in a way which he was ashamed of—but that this very day he had commenced another career, and that he hoped and trusted he should be successful in adhering to it. 'For indeed, sir," he said — "indeed, sir, I am quite weary of the noise and tumult in which I have been living. Your quiet home has recalled *home* to my recollections—I have not been for weeks so happy as you have made me this day—for what clamorous pleasures are worthy of the name of happiness? How I envy you your calm life, sir!"

The worthy senior, while Reginald was talking in this style, listened with a look of great kindness; but at the same time there was something on his lips that seemed as if it might almost have grown into a smile, had the discourse proceeded. He answered, however, gaily and inspiritingly, "I see how it is, my young friend—I see perfectly well how the matter stands. You've been kicking up a terrible racket among you, and you're wearied of it; but, my man, one cannot sow all the wild oats without turning the furrow —ye'll just go on again, and then stop, and then on again, until the job's done; and then you'll sit your ways down, and have quietness enough when your time's come for it."

"You speak so cheerfully, sir," said Reginald, "because you have reached the time of quiet yourself, and are free from troubles and cares."

"Hoolie and fairly," quoth the Priest— "my bonny young lad, I have my troubles and my cares as well as my neighbours. I warrant you, you have a fine notion of what cares are at your time of day.—What would you think, now, of finding yourself wearing away, going fast down the hill of life, my bird, and seeing a child of your own, or one that you liked as if she was such—a lassie like Ellen Hesketh, we shall suppose—about to be left alone in the world, poor maybe, as she is sure to be at the best of it, and without anybody to look after her?—Nay, nay, my dear, your troubles are to begin yet, ye may take my word for that—But keep a good heart—no wisdom in sinking; keep a good stout heart, and do your duty to God and man, and no fears of you."

Miss Hesketh, re-entering the parlour, cut short the lecture of the old gentleman, and gave perhaps a new turn to the thoughts of the young one. There was, however, no lack of conversation. Keith took a sportive sort of pleasure in making the young man talk of his college, and the girl of her cloister, and in comparing and contrasting the feelings which the several experiences of monastic and demi-monastic life had left upon their minds. Ellen spoke with such regretful enthusiasm of the good Abbess and sisters of St. Anthony's, that Reginald could not help seeing the young lady entertained a strong predilection for the religious life; and this very perceptible partiality for what seemed so little worthy of so young and fair a creature, and so little likely to have attracted her imagination, together with some of the hints which Mr. Keith had dropped about her future prospects, was enough to make the young man peruse the pensive lines of her downcast beauty with an ever deepening interest.

Altogether Reginald was so much pleased and so much interested, that he would scarcely have left the Priest's fireside at nine o'clock, had not the old gentleman himself said something about the fatigues of the day, which he could not avoid taking as a sort of hint. He was not suffered to go, however, until he had promised over and over again to be less a stranger for the future; and when he did find himself once more alone upon his way, his fancy still clung to and lingered upon the scene which he had quitted. As he walked through the dark and silent city, he felt as if he had never before been so completely alone in the world; and yet when he had entered his own College, the glare of lights, and the sounds of jovial mirth which met him there, had that about them which was a thousand times less in harmony with the tone of his thoughts. He could not reach his room without passing close by the windows of that stately refectory where all the young men of * * * were celebrating, with wine and wassail, the memory of the Sainted Prelate, who had reared four centuries ago the venerable roof under which they were sitting. The clamour of voices—the boisterous chorus—the drunken laugh, fell upon an ear that had been toned for very different melodies; and the boy, hurrying swiftly beyond the reach of all that odious tumult, locked himself once more in a solitary chamber—where, drawing his chair to the fire-side, he sat down to lose himself in such waking dreams as total silence, and a dim red light, and the memory of Ellen Hesketh, might, among them, be pleased to inspire and prolong.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OXFORD SOCIETY.

THESE good dispositions held their sway for a period of greater length than the reader may perhaps have expected to hear of. For three weeks our youth devoted himself zealously and passionately to his studies, and seldom left his apartment except when his duties required him to do so. Mr. Chisney, the great tempter, never met him without doing all he could to induce him to join some gay party; but he resisted all his arguments, and, which was far more difficult, all his jeers.

During this period of virtuous retirement, Reginald called twice or thrice at Mr. Keith's; but it so happened, that he always found the old Priest from home, and he did not venture to inquire for Miss Hesketh in his absence. He did not think it right for him to intrude upon them in the evening; but more than once, after a laborious day, he walked out in the dusk, and came near enough the windows to catch the echoes of Ellen's voice, as she was accompanying her guitar for her uncle's amusement. That voice once heard, need it be said, that the boy lingered until it could be heard no more? But even when all was silence, often would he linger there, or walk alone in the star-light, beneath the wintry elms of Heddington, keeping his eye upon the small obscure roof beneath which he had once been so happy.

However, this life lasted, after all, for no more than three weeks. By this time Reginald had acquired so much confidence in himself, that he ventured to accept of an invitation from Stukeley,—who, by the way, had made, after he learned the true history of poor Dinah Gray, many generous but vain efforts to force back Reginald's money upon him.—Alas! that invitation led to others, and, the broad barrier once removed, the interior fortifications made but a slender defence. In brief, he soon plunged more deeply than ever into the stream of dissipation—and, not to waste many words upon a disagreeable subject, he found himself ere long involved in an inextricable maze of such difficulties, as that precocious dissipation seldom fails to heap on those who indulge in it.

It must be confessed, even by the austerest who reflects calmly upon his own experiences, that there are few situations wherein poor human nature is exposed to a more engaging species of seduction, than that in which our young man found himself. There is a kindness, a genuine openness of heart, about such youthful votaries of pleasure, as those who surrounded him, much more difficult to be repelled with coldness, than all the finished blandishments of fashionable and practised voluptuaries. The total absence of all art and all concealment—the readiness with which every thought is revealed—the warmth with which every disappointment is partaken—the unfettered intercommunion of all feelings, gay or serious—there is a charm about these simple snares, effectually to baffle which, requires perhaps either a colder temper than nature had bestowed upon young Dalton, or a much sadder burden of experience, than had as yet been pressed upon him by the doings of the world. His temperament, sanguine to excess, fitted him to be the plaything of his passions. His quick imagination heightened indeed the severity of his occasional regrets; but it was equally ready to heighten the promise of the coming, or the relish of the present, indulgence. His brilliant spirits made him the favourite of all in the hour of enjoyment, and they made him the favourite object of every seductive art, in those calmer hours when his own reflections were gloomy. The new excitement was ever near to chase the languor which that of yesterday had bequeathed—and he had not as yet "descended into himself," as the philosopher phrases it—he had not brought the skill to trace his own actions to their secret springs; and if the stronger impulses were things he sometimes dreaded, he certainly had not taught himself to guide those more easy of guidance, less violent indeed in their operation, but sometimes not less dangerous in their remote effects.

Had Reginald been possessed of a fortune, or had he been the son of a rich man, such boyish extravagances, as he was ere long led into, might have been well repaid in the main by the lessons of various kinds which, in spite of himself, he must have been taught even during the period of these indulgences. Nay, had Oxford been like almost any other city in the world, a boy, such as he was, could scarcely have found the means to carry his extravagances to anything like a dangerous, not to say, a ruinous extent. But whoever knows the place, is well aware that no limit is affixed by tradesmen to the credit which they grant, and while the honourable conduct which has established this system cannot be too highly praised, it must be admitted, that, in regard to the young men themselves, such a system, so thoroughly established, is fraught with temptations very hard to be resisted, and, when not resisted, entailing consequences that too often cost hard enough after-struggles, ere they are altogether got rid of. He, entirely unaccustomed as he had been to the management of money, and of course extremely ignorant as to its value, did what ninety-nine out of a hundred, in a similar situation, would have done, and, it is to be feared, always will do—he yielded to temptations, the consequences of which he had had no previous opportunity of estimating; and, long before the season when he was to return to Lannwell came round, he had incurred a debt which he knew, on reflection, must be great, but which he had not the courage to calculate exactly. It must be quite unnecessary to descend into particulars. He had drank and rioted—he had hunted—above all, he had betted and gamed at cock-pits and bull-baitings, and sparring-matches, and I know not what besides. No man, the first year he spends in Oxford, has much chance to become acquainted, from his own experience, with the frown of what the academical Muse of "the Splendid Shilling" calls the

"Horrible monster, abhorr'd of gods and men!"

But this, as we have hinted, was just one of the most unfortunate of all the circumstances that surrounded him; for had Reginald been

dunned, he certainly must have soon enough learned to dread the idea of debt.

His friends about him were, as he very soon discovered, much more deeply in debt than himself. Such of them as had attained any considerable standing, were occasionally honoured with visits of an unpleasant nature ; but all this seemed to be treated by them so perfectly in the light of a jest—there was such a flow of witticisms about "sporting oak," &c. —and such total *nonchalance* in the air with which these were uttered, that our poor youth might be pardoned in so far, if he caught the language—which always infers catching, at least to a certain extent, the manner of thinking—of the place where he was, and of the associates with whom he was so continually surrounded.

There existed, moreover, at Oxford, at that particular period, a source of idleness and dissipation, of which the present race of academical youth have probably lost even the recollection. Among the first volunteer corps raised, when the French invasion was threatened, had been one consisting entirely of members of the University—and though the fugleman was a reverend Fellow, and almost all the officers Masters of Arts, perhaps a finer volunteer regiment never mustered upon English ground. That corps, however, I know not well for what reason, had been broken up about a year before Reginald came to Oxford. On its dissolution, a great number of the young gentlemen who had figured in its ranks, full of that martial enthusiasm which then burned all over the country, had solicited and obtained the permission of their superiors to join the regiment of the city. It is possible that they had been encouraged to do this from the praiseworthy notion, that the intercourse which must follow might tend to nourish kindly feelings among classes of people who had heretofore been too much disunited. Be that as it might, Chisney, among many others, had become a private in the Oxford volunteers, and he, ardent in whatever he meddled with, had soon risen to the station of a serjeant among them. One of the first things he did, after Reginald's entrance, was to enlist him. Our youth, ere the winter was over, was Chisney's corporal—and he had not attained that distinction without having shown his ability in the mess-suppers at the Lamb's Head, as well as in the skirmishes of the Port Meadow. In a word, he had become as great a favourite among these volunteers, as among his fellow-collegians—and the variety of the scenes into which their company led him, acted as a stimulus, alike powerful and dangerous, at times when the sameness of mere academical dissipation might, but for such intervention, have chanced to pall upon his appetite.

Every now and then, during this season of folly, Reginald was invited to spend a day at Mr. Keith's. For the most part he was the only guest at the Priest's table, but occasionally an old emigrant Abbé, or the like, was also present. From every visit to that quiet fire-side, our youth returned disgusted with himself, and full of good resolutions. These feelings soon evaporated under the influences of which we have already heard perhaps more than enough ; but other feelings, not quite so evanescent, received their food in the same place ; and the idea of Ellen Hesketh, associated as it was with the only captivating images of quiet, and repose, and innocence, that Oxford presented to his view, gradually took possession of his heart and fancy with a power not the less deep, because he was half unconscious of its sway.

A timid, a fearful, a reverent adoration it was with which he regarded what circumstances had conspired to make his only symbol of virtue and loveliness united. Her presence never failed to agitate him with a thousand mingled emotions, amongst which the serious and the melancholy were not awanting. But how different that gentle seriousness, that sweet melancholy, from the harsher pangs of self-reproach and remorse that at other times flashed through a bosom, whose original purity had become tarnished, while its tender sensitiveness still remained unseared and unhardened beneath a surface no longer worthy of its delicacy? Her voice—her deep melodious voice—thrilled his soul with a sorrowful luxury ; her soft clear eye darted sad and solemn inspirations into his perplexed and struggling breast. He gazed on her as on something which he durst not presume to love —he listened with a pensive breathlessness, a far-off hopeless humility of devotion — the blood forsook his cheek while he gazed, and while he listened tears would have gushed over his pale cheeks, if they durst.

Elsewhere, all the charms even of Ellen Hesketh might easily have failed in producing such an intense seriousness of passion in the bosom of a young man whose nature rendered him sufficiently liable to the entertainment of all strong emotions, and from whose breast, therefore, one kind of emotion was ever ready enough to chase another ; but in Oxford she was alone. The young gentlemen who pursue their studies there, are safe, for the most part at least, from one species of interruption, the effects of which, both good and bad, are largely and continually experienced in almost all other places of the kind. Reginald, it is certain, saw nothing, or almost nothing, of such female society as might have been likely to scatter over a more extended surface those feelings which, as we have seen, were, in his case, concentrated from the beginning upon one beautiful object. Though his handsome person procured for our youth invitations to a few female parties in Oxford, there was about these nothing that could leave any impression other than of a ludicrous character upon his fancy. To the excellent

female society which of course is to be found in such a place, he chanced to have no access ; he saw only the little *tea-and-turnout* given by some venerable spinster or dowager, the heiress or the relict of some defunct doctor, where a few old tutors play shilling whist with grandmothers, and a few beardless boys flirt with belles, who have flirted, in all likelihood, with their fathers before them ; and what wonder that he turned, as from a penance, to the roaring joviality of a juvenile supper-party? The dame who had at first condescended to invite him, was one of those who, by continually associating with the permanent pedants of the place, have acquired a sort of tutorial stateliness of manner, a formal and deliberate style of enunciating nothings, a cold lofty look, a dull haughty eye, and a certain solemnity of stupidity, than which earth holds nothing more risible. In her, too, as in some others of the same class, these engaging attributes were accompanied with a degree of fatness, and a bloated or blowsy complexion, such as might testify abundantly that high feeding, &c., can go on elsewhere than at "high tables." The superannuated sort of attempts at flirtation which are occasionally observed diverting one of these dangerous nymphs, and some old unwieldy canon, in the recess of a Gothic window—their antediluvian jokes,—their compliments plagiarised from Sir Charles Grandison—their drowsy simpers and their laborious fondlings, are essentially things more calculated, it is true, for creating pity than laughter. But the gown and cassock (for Oxonians of all ranks wear their full costume at an Oxonian rout) spread an air of irresistible mirth over doings even of this pitiable kind,—

> "Lo ! Venus sits in semblance of a nun,
> And purple Bacchus hooded like a friar."

An enormous wig and flowing bands seem so strange accompaniments to a card-table—and a square cap, with a long black tuft, in one hand, forms so odd a contrast to the playfully-abstracted fan, with which the reverend Doctor's other plump little hand is dallying.

To say truth, the Oxford ladies of the second rank are by no means captivating. Even when their years have not been formidably many, the habits of being flirted with by transient hundreds, and made love to (serious love I mean) by nobody, have impressed a sort of cold cautiousness upon their virgin smiles ; discontent, disappointment, hope deferred, soon plant premature wrinkles about the brightest eye, and wreathe lips of no contemptible richness, with a sneer as hopelessly malicious as ever was that of spinsterly threescore. Among these ladies, therefore, there is too frequently little but superficial display —a cold artificial reserve, or, worse still, a style of forced gaiety, suggesting so immediately the ideas of the hackneyed and *usée* existence from which it has been derived, that perhaps the younger the belle is, her charms are really so much the less likely to prove killing.

The prevalent conversation at the two or three parties of this sort where our Reginald, in his ignorance of better things, made his appearance, consisted of the most worn-out common-places of gallantry, or of eternal prosings about degrees, benefices, doctorates, and deaneries. The politicians of them prated not of Parliament, but of the Latin speeches against Popery in the Convocation. The bluestockings' babble was not of the popular literature of this or of any age, past or to come, but of White's Bampton Lectures, Mant's Amorous Lyrics, an epigram that had set all Brazen-nose in a roar, or a prize-essay that had added new glories to Oriel. They were more occupied about the vacant bishopric than the opening campaign ; and there was more triumph in the expulsion of one juvenile heretic, than in the expected restoration of three exiled legitimates.

Miss Hesketh's modest charms, charms which had never been sullied by the breath of the gaudy heartless world—charms, above all, which, such was the retirement in which Mr. Keith necessarily lived, might almost be said to exist here for Reginald alone—these young and gentle charms presented a contrast to all this, the effects of which we shall leave the reader to picture for himself, if indeed enough has not been said already to give some guidance to his imagination.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LETTERS FROM HOME.

THE gay winter, the gayer spring, had passed away—the summer was now approaching to its richest period of splendour—and, in the course of two days, Reginald was to bid adieu for a season to the scene of all his follies, and return for several months to the sequestered valley where he had first breathed the air of heaven, and where so many careless and happy summers had flown over his head. The remittance which was to furnish him with the means of travelling to the north, had been received the day before, in a letter, the overflowing kindness of which had given birth in Reginald's bosom to many emotions, besides those which the good Vicar had contemplated while addressing his distant son from the little library at Lannwell —that abode of innocence, unhaunted as yet by suspicion. Revolving in shame and in sorrow the manner in which his time had, for the most part, been wasted, and with alarm no longer to be checked, the consequences which his folly had entailed upon him, and upon his too-confiding parent, our young man had spent a long miserable morning in solitude, and yet made but little

progress in those preparations which his approaching journey required, but to which the internal conflict of so many troublesome meditations had prevented him from giving any steady or efficient application. The dinner-bell surprised him at his unfinished task—its sound reproached his slowness; but he was weary of reproaches, and he obeyed the summons with a sort of half-sulky determination to fling his cares aside, and be Reginald himself again, "until a more convenient season."

He dined, therefore, gay to all appearance among the gay; and when dinner was over, and the usual circle had assembled round their wines and their ices beneath one of the fine old beeches of the College garden, it was he who laughed the loudest, and filled the most overflowing bumper. It was a Saturday evening, as it happened, and the young men were all obliged to quit their bottle for a time, when the chapel bell rung out. During the quiet interval which followed, Reginald, restored to those melancholy reflections, which he had made shift to toss from him amidst jovial faces, became so much depressed, that he resisted, when the service was over, every solicitation, and would not again join the party on the green. He had drank enough ere he left the shadow of the beech to fire his brain, though not to discompose his nerves, and now, that excitement having given place to the languor, which in some measure follows all excitements, he strolled forth alone in a mood of tenfold dejection, if not of tenfold bitterness.

Reginald wished to be alone, yet he dreaded the cheerless solitude of his chamber, and he resolved to go down to the river and row himself in a skiff until it should be dark. He walked hastily through the town, but found, much to his mortification, on reaching Mother Davies's, that every boat of every description was out, or engaged. After standing, therefore, for some time by the side of the Isis, gazing idly and vacantly upon the gay scene which its crowded waters presented, he turned himself once more homewards, more fretted, it may be supposed, than he was likely to have been by so trivial a disappointment in any more genial mood.

He had traversed the winding path of the meadow, and was about to pass through the courts of Christ-Church, that he might shun the bustle of the great Walk, when all of a sudden it occurred to him that he had business enough on his hands for the next day; and that if he did not take this opportunity of paying a visit to St. Clement's, he should perhaps have to quit Oxford without bidding farewell to the good Priest, whose kindnesses had been so unremitting—and without seeing Ellen Hesketh.

He proceeded, therefore, along that magnificent avenue, formed long ago by the ever-princely taste of Wolsey, which, at such an hour, presents certainly one of the grandest, and at the same time one of the gayest of spectacles. The high over-arching branches, clothed in all the luxuriance of June, allowed scarcely one spot of the blue sky over-head to be visible; but between the tall massive trunks of the gigantic elms on the right, the bright meadow, and the gleaming river, with its hundred gliding boats and painted barges, lay full in view; while the descending sun streamed a full yellow radiance all down the broad path itself, giving to the countless groups with which through its long extent it was crowded, all the graceful varieties of richest light and softest shadow. The intermixture of so many dark and antique costumes with crimson scarfs and white plumes, and all the splendours of modern dress, produces an effect eminently picturesque, not very unlike that of an old Italian street in an evening of the Carnival, where a thousand black dominos and gaudy masks are continually chequering each other and contrasted. But indeed the English scene has at least one advantage over the Italian. *There*, all is riot, tumult, jabbering, and squalling — but *here*, the roof of Nature's majestic cathedral hung over an atmosphere as calm as glowing. Everything was silent, and solemn—as if the beautiful sunset had been illuminating and enriching a picture. The chirping of the birds, and even the lazy hum of the evening insects, were heard almost as distinctly as if no human footstep had been near them.

The silence was more in accordance with Reginald's mood than the splendour of the scene; but his imagination had already travelled to St. Clement's, and he walked with unconscious rapidity past a hundred slow and lounging groups, not one face among all which had fixed his notice even for a moment. He kept on at the same pace after he had left the great walk, and so over the bridge of Magdalene, and until he had come within sight of Mr. Keith's roof. He then paused for an instant, and when he resumed his progress, it was with slow and hesitating steps. — At length, however, he reached the threshold, and just touched the knocker. No one answered, and he repeated his knock more loudly—still not the least motion nor whisper from within. A third time he knocked, and a third time nothing but silence ensued.

He now stepped back from the door, and observing that the parlour windows were in part closed, the sudden and painful conviction was forced upon him, that the family were all from home. Perhaps they have all gone to some distance, he said to himself, and may not return for several days. Ten days have passed since I saw Mr. Keith—what may not have happened during that interval!

While he was reflecting thus, and reproaching himself for his negligence — one

sort of neglect he certainly could not lay to his charge—he observed that the small wicket which leads into the Priest's garden, and through that to the chapel, was unfastened. It then occurred to him that they might possibly be engaged in the celebration of some festival of their Church, and he thought there could be no harm in walking through the green, and ascertaining for himself whether any service were really going on in the chapel behind.

The lower windows at the back part of the house were also closed, and there were some little nameless symptoms which gave him more and more the notion of desertion. He stepped slowly over the little green, but had almost stopped when he perceived the Priest's accustomed garden-chair overturned. However, he went on towards the chapel, and when he had passed the thicket of laburnums by which it is divided from the garden, he saw that the door was ajar. Afraid of disturbing the congregation, he crept very softly to the threshold, and listened—but here, too, all was silent. He listened patiently for several minutes, and at last heard a cough, and after that a sound not to be mistaken—scrubbing of a broom. Upon this Reginald took courage, and gently opening the chapel door a little wider, perceived that all was desertion—nobody there but a woman, who, with her back turned towards him, was busily occupied in brushing down cobwebs from about the frame of the altar-piece.

When Reginald's footstep sounded upon the marble floor, she turned round, and screamed,—"Mary Mother, preserve us!"

"Don't be alarmed," said our youth, arresting his steps! "I pray you, don't be alarmed. I have only come to inquire after Mr. Keith, my girl."

I know not what induced Reginald to call her *girl;* for, in point of fact, she was a very comely woman, but could not be under five-and-thirty. She took no offence, however, at the appellation;—calming herself, she descended the altar-steps with no sign of terror upon her countenance unless a pretty enough blush might be one. "O, I beg your pardon, sir," she said. "I protest I didn't know who it might be, sir; but Mr. Keith's better, sir. My husband was at Witham this morning, and he is a great deal better."

"At Witham! How long has Mr. Keith been there? I never heard either of that, or of his being ill."

"Oh! Lord lovey, sir, he has had a sore time of it, indeed. He has been very ill with the fever and ague, sir; and the doctors made him go to Witham-hill on Tuesday, for the change of the air."

"And his niece, Miss Hesketh, is she gone with him?"

"Yes, indeed. Lord bless us, sir! What could the old man do without Miss Hesketh? She nurses him so—you have no notion how kindly she waits on him. Poor young lady, I often think 'tis but a dull life she leads."

"I am just leaving Oxford," said Reginald, very confusedly, "and I wished to see Mr. Keith ere I went. Might I call for him at Witham to-morrow? Do you think he is well enough to see his friends?"

"I'faith, my master, he has so few of them, that I be bound he will be glad to see them even though he were in his bed; but that he isn't, for, as I was telling your honour, my husband (Tom Bowdler, your honour) was up to Witham this very day, and saw him."

"How shall I find him, ma'am?"

"O, your honour, you'll be at no loss; just inquire for Widow Wilkinson's; 'tis not a stone's-throw from the ale-house—just by Lord Abingdon's wall."

In the course of this little colloquy, Mrs. Bowdler had come quite close to Reginald, and a smile had occasionally crossed her blushing cheek, displaying not only perfect confidence in our young man's civility, but one of the whitest and most regular sets of teeth in the world. He was turning to leave the place as soon as he had received the information of her last response, but something in her look suggested to him that he ought to put his hand into his pocket. He therefore slipped out half-a-crown, and bidding her good-bye, dropped it into her hanging-sleeve. Upon this Mrs. Bowdler blushed, and smiled more sweetly than ever, and holding the piece between her fingers with an air of modest irresolution, she said, with something of a start, "Lord bless me! How did you get in, sir? The servant went out some time ago, and sure she locked the front-door ere she gave me the key."

Reginald pointed to the wicket which he had himself left standing quite open; and with that Mrs. Bowdler started again, and said, "Gracious me! the wicket unclosed, and I left all this while so!—Goodness preserve me!"

"Nay," said Reginald, smiling in his turn, "I am sure nobody could ever offer any harm to *you*, Mrs. Bowdler."

Mrs. Bowdler bit her lips, and looking downwards, said, "Very well, sir, since the wicket's open, I need not open the door to let you through the house, however."

"Not at all," said our youth; "I beg you won't give yourself any more trouble;" and with that he moved again towards the wicket. He had got within a couple of paces of it, when Mrs. Bowdler called after him.

"Oh, sir—I beg your pardon, sir, but if you really be a-going to Witham to-morrow, there's a letter here for Mr. Keith, and perhaps you would have the goodness to carry it with you—it would save Bowdler walking so far, and he's not very able for it, poor man, in this weather."

"Oh certainly, most certainly," he an-

swered; "I shall be most happy to take care of the letter for you."

Mrs. Bowdler with this drew the key from the depths of her pocket, and opening the door, apparently not without some little difficulty, preceded Reginald into the house, and through the lobby, into the dim and deserted parlour. The youth stood for a few moments gazing round the room, which contained no piece of furniture that was not familiar and dear to his fancy. The work-table — the guitar-case—the sofa on which Miss Hesketh was accustomed to sit, with some music-books still lying scattered on its cushions—he could have perused them all over for an hour without wearying. He started, however, after a little time, and said to Mrs. Bowdler, who had been standing all the while as idly as himself at his elbow, "Well, ma'am, where is the letter? I don't see it upon the table."

She walked hastily out of the room, and returned in a moment with the epistle in her hand. Reginald, putting it in his pocket, cast one glance more round the parlour, and hurried out of it so quickly, that he had passed the green, and closed the wicket, ere Mrs. Bowdler had stirred from the spot where he received the letter from her hands.

Our youth, not caring to face the High-street, which presented a scene of splendour only inferior to that of Christ-church meadow, turned down into Magdalene-garden, and strolled for an hour or more in the utter solitude of Addison's walk. By this time the full moon was visible above the horizon, yet, between the brilliant red colours that still lingered over the west, and the thick vapours which were ascending from the meadows of Isis of Charwell, her rays were to a considerable extent neutralised and obscured; so that Reginald could have little chance either of recognising any one, or of being recognised. And accordingly he reached, without interruption, the gate of his own college—but there, just in front of the portico, there stood a talking, laughing group, by several of whom he was hailed in the same breath, the moment moonlight or twilight enabled them to distinguish his figure.

Frederick Chisney was not among the first to salute Reginald; but after a few moments had passed in general and noisy conversation, he whispered that he had something to say to him, and drew him aside from the rest. When they had got to a little distance, "Dalton," said he, "I have been looking for you everywhere this hour past. I have received by this evening's post some news that must interest you."

"You speak gravely, Frederick—What is it, I pray you?—You are the bearer of ill news."

"Nay, that as it may be—but, in one word, the Squire's dead."

"Your brother! Alas, Frederick, you shock me indeed!"

"No, no; you're too hard upon me, after all, Reginald—'tis but our old friend, Squire Dalton."

"Dead! God bless me! how? when? Poor Mrs. Elizabeth, what will become of her?"

"Gout, Reginald, gout in the stomach, man—Off like a shot—you'll scarcely be in time for the funeral, though you start to-morrow morning."

"Nay, Chisney, don't talk so heartlessly. I'm sure he was the kindest, worthiest soul—so kind to both of us, though we were but boys to him."

"God rest the worthy old soul!—Would you have all the good old gentlemen live for ever, Reginald? A pretty world we youngsters should have.—But what's the use of all this humbug, my dear fellow? Don't you see that there's nothing between your father and Grypherwast now, except Miss Dalton? and I'm sure her life's not worth three years' purchase."

"You understand very little of these matters, Chisney; I believe Miss Dalton may do what she pleases with her estates."

"Well, and what will she please? Hang it, man, you must run down and assist the Vicar in coaxing her."

"You don't know the Vicar, Frederick."

"Well, but I know you, I suppose; and let me tell you, this is a famous thing for you, my buck. Why, I take it you may raise something decent to-morrow, if you have a mind."

"How? what? I protest I can't understand you."

"Why, Reginald Dalton, do you take me for a goose, an ass, an idiot? Don't I know very well how you have been going your lengths ever since October? and do you think I have not observed some of your down looks of late?—Why, my meaning is plain and simple, man, and you need not affect to mistake me."

"I affect nothing—Speak out at once, and I will answer you."

"Well, then, since you will have the word itself, you've got into debt, Reginald (who has not for that matter?), and you've been drooping your brows about it of late, as if you could hang yourself.—Now cheer up, my boy, for you may take my word for it, a post-obit is an excellent thing, and you may negotiate one in half a day's time with the hardest Jew in Cheapside."

Reginald paused for a moment, ere he made any answer. "Chisney," he said, "I can no longer mistake you. You have penetrated my distresses, and you advise me to seek relief in my dishonour."

"Your dishonour, forsooth! Pooh, pooh! Mr. Dalton, you take things a little too seriously, however.—Don't you see that one of two things must happen?—either your papa will come to the estate, and then you

will easily afford to pay the sum, or he will be cheated out of it, and then, that is if your bond be tolerably managed, there will be no sum you need pay at all."

"In the first of which cases, I should have been acting the part of a fool—in the second, that of a scoundrel.—Have done, I beseech you—but I do not insult you, by supposing you have been speaking in earnest."

"Well, well, as you like it, Dalton—take your own way—here's my brother's letter, you may read it at your leisure ; and here's one to yourself from your father, which travelled under the same frank."

Reginald eagerly took the offered letters, and moved towards his college-gate—but Chisney stopped him. "Nay," he said, "if you start in the morning, as I take it you will, we shall not meet again for these six weeks. Good-bye to you, my friend ; and mind me, in spite of all that has passed, I must still advise you to look to your hits. Catline's a cunning fellow, or I'm greatly mistaken in him—once more, I say, mind your hits."

"I know nothing of Sir Charles Catline," answered Reginald, impatiently.

"Hark you, my friend," proceeded Chisney. "Sir Charles Catline has two daughters, and no son. The devil's in't if you can't make the *beaux yeux* to one of them this summer ; and then, by Jupiter, safe's the word—all will go as smoothly as——"

"Have done, have done, Chisney—you weary, you sicken, you disgust me."

"There spoke a true swain ! and so you really do in soul and sincerity conceive yourself to be in love ! Why, I protest I gave you credit for more *nous*, my lad. I really never thought you dreamed of anything more than a little fun *pour passer le tems*."

"Once more, Chisney, I pray you cease.—What new stuff is this you are after ?"

"What new stuff is this *you* are after, if you please, my boy ? Come, come, I'm very glad the term's over—you'll forget St. Clement's—O, ye gods, what a Vaucluse !—and the charming little German, long before Michaelmas."

"I know of no right you have, Frederick Chisney, to make a young lady with whom you have no acquaintance, the subject of your jokes—you have often hinted the same sort of nonsense before. Once for all, I beg this may be the last of it."

"Once for all, I beg of you that this may be the last of it ! Why, you look as sulky as a he-bear, merely because an old friend advises you to be on your guard with a little artful outlandish piece of goods, about whom you know no more than the man in the moon."

"Miss Hesketh's uncle is a clergyman, and he is a gentleman of as good blood as either you or I. Miss Hesketh is an innocent and accomplished young lady. When you talk of me as being in love with her, you know you are drivelling—but I have other things to think of, and once more I entreat you to have done with all this folly."

These last words were said with an air of sternness which Chisney was altogether unprepared for. He whistled a bar or two of *Jack-a-dandy*, beating the time with his foot—and then saying hastily,—"Well, well, Reginald, take your own way, *au revoir*, *mon ami*,"—he turned gaily on his heel, and left our youth to his meditations.

That these were perplexed enough and gloomy in the main, the reader will easily imagine. The death of the good Squire, more especially when he read the letter in which his father communicated it, saddened and afflicted Reginald. The more he reflected on his own situation, the more dark was the colouring his fancy heaped upon all its features ; and when leaning from his window he looked down upon the cloisters and towers of his college, all reposing in the now perfect moonlight, a new sentiment of melancholy began to diffuse itself over his mind. Much reason as he had given himself to look back with shame upon his own brief academical career, the solemn antique scenery which had at first so much pleased his imagination, still kept all its beauty, and all its majesty, unsullied and undiminished for his eyes.—No portion of the unhappy disgust which HE had earned, adhered to these venerable precincts—he considered himself as one that had sinned against them too, as having taken evil and too effectual pains to neutralise within himself the wholesome feelings and elevating aspirations, which they, and the associations with which they were fraught, might have so naturally kindled, and so powerfully sustained.—"I shall soon leave this majestic place," he said to himself—"and I shall leave it for ever. How can I hope, or dare, or desire to return to it ? Alas ! the images that should have been to me among the dearest treasures of memory, will lie heavy upon my heart, entwined, inextricably entwined, with the pains of shame, repentance, remorse, misery. One day more, and I shall bid all this beauty a sorrowful—a hopeless farewell ! One day more, and Oxford, and all I have seen in Oxford, will be to me a sad remembrance—a sorrowful dream !—Alas ! would, in all things, it might be a dream !"

CHAPTER XXV.

ALAS, POOR LOVE!

THE next day was Sunday. Reginald, after the morning service of the chapel, spent a couple of hours in arranging some of his affairs previous to his departure, and in packing his portmanteau ; and then walked down to the river, and procured a little skiff, in which he rowed himself to Godstow-bridge. The day was a fine one, yet it was not until

noon that the sun had completely conquered the mists of the valley, and shone out in his full splendour, amidst a breathless and sultry sky of unclouded azure. By that time Reginald had accomplished the better part of his voyage, and he could afford to take the remainder of it as leisurely as the state of the weather required.

A few minutes' walk brought him to the small hamlet of Witham, and he had no difficulty in finding out the house he had come in quest of. It was an humble but very neat cottage, situated about a stone-cast off the road. Some intervening orchards shut it completely from the view of the village; but when he had passed these, an open prospect of great magnificence lay before, or rather beneath him—the silver windings of Isis gleaming upon the plain—the dome of Radcliffe, and a few more of the Oxford towers, visible against the horizon towards the right—and in front the wide-stretching masses of the old forest of Woodstock, with here and there a glimpse of some of the green lawns of Blenheim Park. Nearer, or rather, as it seemed, just under the hill on which he was standing, lay the bridge at which he had left his skiff; and the grey and crumbling remains of the nunnery where Fair Rosamond,

"Rosa mundi, non Rosa munda,"

still sleeps within the same hallowed precincts, from which royal love of old tempted her virgin-steps to stray.

Reginald knocked at the door of the cottage, and it was opened to him by Widow Wilkinson herself, a respectable-looking old matron, who seemed, from the manner in which she answered his inquiries, to entertain a very sincere regard for her priest. She told him that Mr. Keith had indeed been very seriously ill, but that now there was nothing to create any immediate alarm, and that he might safely quit his chamber, if he had but strength enough to do so. She said he was at that moment quite alone, having with some difficulty prevailed on his niece to walk out and breathe the fresh air; and that if the young gentleman would send in his name, perhaps Mr. Keith might be all the better for seeing him in his bed-room.

The worthy invalid made no difficulty about admitting his young friend, who was both surprised and grieved beyond measure with the change that so short an illness had been enough to produce in his appearance. The old man was sitting in an easy-chair wrapt in a bed-gown, and supported by pillows. His cheek was pale as ashes—his eye sunk—his hand extenuated and tremulous—his voice sounded feeble and broken. Yet even in this disconsolate condition, he had still kind looks and kind words for Reginald Dalton. His chair was placed so as to give him a full view of the same beautiful prospect which the youth had been contemplating the moment before; and he pointed to a seat that stood close beside him, from which Reginald also could see the Nunnery and the river.

His visitor conversed with him for several minutes, and said as much as he could towards effacing the impressions which seemed to have taken possession of his mind. The old man, however, was too calmly persuaded that his constitution was giving way, to be moved by any of those arguments which might have found ready welcome from one that feared to look on the face of Death. He smiled placidly, and said in a whisper, "You are good and kind, my dear; but the end is near, and I feel it to be so. When are you to go from Oxford, and how long are you to be absent from it?"

"I am to leave Oxford to-morrow morning," said our youth; "and I fear, my dear sir, that I shall scarcely return to College again."

"You look sadly, and you speak sadly, my young friend. Has anything happened to distress you?"

"I have just heard of the death of a very dear old friend," he answered.

"Ah! my dear, you're young, and you must expect to see your old friends drop away from beside you. You must not suffer yourself to be cast down too much by things that the course of nature renders inevitable. But why speak you of not returning to your College? I hope this loss is not one that can alter your views in life?"

"Oh! sir," said Reginald, "why should I trouble you with my miseries? I have been foolish and extravagant. My father will have but too much reason to alter his opinion of me; and I fear I have already done enough to prevent him from sending me hither any more."

"Nay, nay, calm yourself, my dear. You have not been here very long yet—you will behave yourself more carefully next winter; and few cut the sleeve by the arm the first trial they make of it, any more than yourself. Your father will not judge harshly, he will remember his own young days."

"Ah! yes, sir; but he will have nothing like this to remember."

"Maybe not; but he will have *something* to remember. *Jamais ne fut jeune homme réglé comme un papier de musique.* I pray you, tell him all your story. Don't think to spare yourself by making half-work."

Reginald answered nothing, but sat blushing deeply, with his eyes fixed in unconscious stedfastness upon the old man's countenance. He also for a time was silent, but at length he took hold of Reginald's hand, and said,—"I would to God it were in my power to save you from this suffering! But, my dear young friend, I am not rich, and I must not rob Ellen of the little purse I have been able to make for her."

Reginald returned the pressure of the old

man's hand, and answered his kind look by one too serious to be called merely kind. "I pray you, sir," he said, "do not thus afflict and distress me."

"I beg your pardon," said the Priest, reading his thoughts in his countenance and in the passion of his tone.—He paused for a moment, and then resumed more lightly,—"Cheer up, cheer up—for all but death there's remedy, and you're a man, or will soon be one, and the world lies all before you; and, as they say over the water, *time brings the roses back.* Above all, my young friend, up with your heart; for if that be once down fairly, where are we?"

"I will do the best I can," faltered out Reginald.

"Ay, and if you do that, you will do a great deal," quoth the Priest; "for as I was saying, you're a man, my dear, and a man may always do very well in the world if he will but set his teeth when the wind blows, and not bleed himself for pimples. Ah! man, how easy should I have been now, had my little Ellen chanced to be a boy!"

There was something so deeply serious in the tone with which these last words were uttered, that Reginald knew not in what way to answer them. He happened to put his hand into his pocket, and it touched the letter which he had brought for Mr. Keith, and which, but for this accident, he might have altogether forgotten to deliver. Glad that he had remembered it, and doubly glad because he hoped it would give a new turn to the old man's reflections, he now handed it to him, with many apologies for so long neglecting it.

The Priest took the letter, and said, while looking about for his spectacles,—"I dare say 'tis something that will easily keep cool." When, however, he had found his glasses, and examined the address, he said, as if more to himself than to Reginald,—"Ralph Macdonald! Well, this is being punctual, however." So saying, the old gentleman nodded an apology to our youth, and began reading his letter. From the anxious expression of his countenance as he began, the boy could not help thinking that the communication referred to some matter of importance; and this notion was certainly confirmed by the gloom which visibly gathered upon the old man's face, as his reading proceeded. When he had come to the end, he folded it up very slowly, and, in spite of the tremulousness of his fingers, very carefully, and then sinking back in his chair, seemed to give himself up for a few seconds to painful and perplexing thoughts. A something between a sigh and a groan escaped from his lips—he started as if recollecting himself, and said, with a smile—it was indeed a very feeble one—"My young friend, you see we can all preach better than we can practise; you have been doubly the bearer of ill tidings."

"No calamity among your family, I hope?" said the youth, anxiously returning his anxious and melancholy gaze.

"My dear young friend," said the Priest, recovering himself, "you have saddened me with your troubles, and doubly, trebly so, because I can't lighten them for you. There is no reason why I should give *you* similar pain, and the less, because, God knows, I have a true conviction it would be similarly aggravated."

"And yet," said Reginald, "if it were possible that I could——"

"No, no, my dear lad," said the Priest, "'tis a matter that I must find an older hand for."—He paused, and another faint smile passed over his face ere he proceeded—"You see, my good young friend, the affair is just this,—Mr. Ralph Macdonald, your fellow-traveller, is connected, in some sort—in the same sort of way, I may say—originally, I mean—as myself, with Miss Hesketh, and I thought, perhaps, he would have given her a home, if it pleased God to take me away. But man proposes, and God disposes; and, as an old Scotch song says, my man,

> 'To seek hot water beneath cold ice,
> I wot ye, it is a great foleye.'"

"My dear sir," said Reginald, "I cannot bear to hear you talk thus. You are better, and better you will be."

"Well, well, say so, if it please ye, my dear. I would it were so, for my poor lassie's sake."

"Nay, sir," quoth Reginald, "you allow yourself to be distressed with ideas that I am sure can have no foundation. Is it possible that any relation of Miss Hesketh's——"

"Softly, softly, my dear. You see *chacun le sien, n'est pas trop.* Mr. Macdonald is not a drop's blood to Miss Hesketh; I must not deceive you as to that matter."

"O, I beg your pardon; I thought you said he was related to Miss Hesketh in the same degree with yourself."

"Well, well, my young friend," said the Priest, after a moment's pause, "I see I've let out something that I did not just mean to have told you; but, in truth, 'tis but a small affair either to keep or to part with. The truth is, Mr. Reginald, that Miss Hesketh is nowise related to my family, any more than to Mr. Macdonald's. She is an orphan—and a worthy kind soul, a sister of mine, that is now no more, sir, took a fancy to bring her up as her own child; and since my sister's death, she has lived with me as you have seen us. That's all the story, Mr. Dalton; but I confess I did think that Ralph would have acted rather differently, particularly (for since I *have* mentioned the subject, I may mention that too), as it was through his means that the acquaintance which led to this connection first began. But this is all nothing to you, my young friend—you have cares of

your own, the more's the pity ; but they, I hope, will not last long—*Faute confessée est demi pardonnée*—Remember that wise saying, and make a clean breast of it whenever you get home."

"Indeed I will, indeed I will, sir," said the boy ; and with that he rose, for he feared that he might have already stayed longer with the invalid than might have been quite proper. He offered his hand, and the old man, squeezing it very tenderly, said,—"Nay, if you must go, God bless you ; but I was in hopes you would have stayed the day, and helped Ellen to nurse me."

"Surely, sir, if I could be of the least use," said Reginald, his face brightening a little.

"Then do, my dear, just lay down your hat again—or, what may perhaps be as well, would you just walk down to the foot of the hill for a little—you'll fall in with Ellen, I take it, somewhere or other near Rosamond's Chapel, for that's always her haunt—and by the time you come back, I shall have rested myself with half an hour's nap, and Mrs. Wilkinson will have her chicken ready."

Reginald assisted the old man into his bed, and then walked slowly by himself down the hill of Witham. His mind, which had been greatly agitated, in seeing what he had seen, in speaking what he spoken, and in hearing what he had heard, had now sunk into a sort of melancholy languor, which the breathless stillness of the scene around him perhaps promoted or prolonged. There was not a single breath of wind to touch his cheek—the sky hung over him with a heavy sultry brightness—the trees stood, not a bough, not a leaf waving, in motionless majesty—a dead and lazy silence pervaded earth and air, and now and then the solitary leap of a fish from the stream was the loudest sound that disturbed the echoes of Godstow.

He found one of the gates unlocked, and stood within the wide circuit of those grey and mouldering walls, that still mark the limits of the old nunnery. The low moss-covered fruit-trees of the monastic orchard flung soft and deep shadows upon the unshorn turf below ; the ivy hung in dark slumbering masses from every ruinous fragment ; the little rivulet, which winds through the guarded precincts, shrunk far within its usual bound, trickled audibly from pebble to pebble. Reginald followed its course to the arch-way, beneath which it gushes into the Isis—but there his steps were arrested.—He heard it distinctly—it was but a single verse, and it was sung very lowly—but no voice, save that of Ellen Hesketh, could have poured out those soft and trembling tones.

He listened for a few moments, but the voice was silent. He then advanced again between the thick umbrageous trees, until he had come within sight of the chapel itself, from which, it seemed to him, the sounds had proceeded. Again they were heard—again the same sweet and melancholy strain echoed from within the damp arches, and shook the stillness of the desolate garden. Here, then, she was, and it was to find her he had come thither ; yet now a certain strange mysterious fearfulness crept over all his mind, and he durst not, could not, proceed.

He lay down prostrate among the long grass, which, so deep was the shade above, yet retained the moisture of the last night's dew, and thence, gazing wistfully upon the low door of the dismantled chapel, he drank the sorrowful melody timidly, breathlessly, in pain, and yet in luxury.

Again it was silent—a thousand perplexing, agonising thoughts hovered around and above him—he could not toss them away from him—he could not forget them. They were *there*, and they were stronger than he, and he felt himself to be their slave and their prisoner. But their fetters, though within view, had not yet chained up all his spirit ; the gloom overhung, but had not overwhelmed him ; the pressure had not squeezed him with all its iron strength. No—the sense of misery, the keenest of all, had communicated its feverish and morbid quickness to that which it could not expel—Love, timorous, hopeless love, had caught a sort of infectious energy, and the long-suppressed flame glowed with a stern and desperate stedfastness, amidst the darkness which had deepened around its altars. Next moment, however, that energy was half extinguished in dejection ;—the flame still burnt intensely—but lowly as of old.

"Alas !" he said to himself, "I shall never hear her again—I am ruined, undone, utterly undone—blasted in the very opening—withered on the threshold ! — Humiliation, pain, misery, lie before me, as surely as folly, madness, phrenzy, wickedness, are behind — as surely as shame, burning, intolerable shame, is with me *now*. Yet one feeling at least is pure—*here* I have worshipped innocence in innocence. Alas ! it is *here* — here, above all—that I am to suffer ! Miserable creature that I am ! She is feeble, yet I have no arm to protect her ; she is friendless, yet the heart that is hers, and hers only, dares not even pour itself at her feet. She is alone in her purity ; I alone in sinful, self-created helplessness ! Love, phrenzy of phrenzies, dream of dreams ! what have I to do with Love ? Why do I haunt her footsteps ? why do I pollute the air she breathes ?—how dare I to mingle the groans of guilty despair with those tender sighs ?—Beautiful, spotless angel, what have I to do in bringing my remorseful gloom into the home of your virtuous tears, your gentle sorrows !—How shall I dare to watch with you—with *you*—beside the pillow of a good man's sickness ?—Shame ! shame ! let me flee from him, from you—from all but myself and my misery !"

He had started from his wet lair—he stood with a cheek of scarlet, an eye darkly flashing

and a lip of stedfast whiteness, gazing on the ivied ruin, like one who gazes his last. At that moment Ellen's sweet voice once more thrilled upon his ear. It seemed as if the melody was coming nearer—another moment, and she had stepped beyond the threshold. She advanced towards a part of the wall which was much decayed, and stood quite near the speechless and motionless youth, looking down upon the calm waters of Isis gliding just below her, and singing all the while the same air he had first heard from her lips.—Alas! if it sounded sorrowfully *then*, how deep was now the sorrow breathed from that subdued and broken warbling of

"The Rhine! the Rhine! be blessings on the Rhine!"

She leaned herself over the low green wall, and Reginald heard a sob struggle against the melody. "She grieves," he said to himself—"she grieves, she weeps!" and with that, losing all mastery of himself, he rushed through the thicket.

Ellen, hearing the rustling of leaves, and the tramp of a hasty foot, turned towards the boy, who stopped short upon reaching the open turf. Her first alarm was gone, when she recognised him; and she said, a faint smile hovering on her lips, "Mr. Dalton, I confess I was half frightened — How and whence have you come?" Ere she had finished the sentence, however, her soft eye had instinctively retreated from the wild and distracted gaze of Reginald—she shrunk a step backward, and re-echoed her own question in a totally different tone—"Mr. Dalton, how are you here?—whence have you come?—You alarm me, Mr. Dalton—your looks alarm me. Speak, why do you look so?"

"Miss Hesketh," he answered, striving to compose himself, "there is nothing to alarm you—I have just come from Witham—Mr. Keith told me you were here."

"You are ill, Mr. Dalton—you look exceedingly ill, indeed, sir. You should not have left Oxford to-day."

"I *am* to leave Oxford to-morrow—I could not go without saying farewell."

"To-morrow!—But why do you look so solemn, Mr. Dalton?—You are quitting college for your vacation?"

"Perhaps for ever, Miss Hesketh—and—"

"O Mr. Dalton, you have seen my uncle—you think he is very badly, I see you do—you think you shall never see him again, I know you think so!"

"No, 'tis not so; he has invited me to come back with you *now*; and besides, Mr. Keith will get better—I hope, I trust, I am sure he will."

"You would fain deceive me," said Ellen, "and 'tis kindly meant."

"Nay, indeed, ma'am, I hope Mr. Keith has seen the worst of his illness. You did well to bring him to this fine air, this beautiful place."

"A beautiful place it is, Mr. Dalton."

"It is Paradise, but I shall never see it again. I look for the last time upon it—and almost—almost for the last time—upon *you*."

The young man shook from head to foot as these words were trembling upon his lips. She, too, threw her eyes on the ground, and a deep glow rushed over her face; but that was chased instantly by a fixed and solemn paleness, and her gaze once more met his.

He advanced close to her (for hitherto he had not changed his position), and leaned for a moment over the broken wall. His hasty hand had discomposed some loose stones, and a fragment of considerable size plunged into the dark stream below. Ellen, thinking the whole was giving way, pulled him quickly backwards from the brink. He lost his balance, and involuntarily, and less by his own act than hers, he was on his knees before her.

"Rise up, Mr. Dalton—I pray you rise."

"I ask for nothing, Miss Hesketh, I hope for nothing, I expect nothing. But since I do kneel, I will not rise till I have said it—I love you, Ellen—I have loved you long—I have loved you from the first hour I saw you. I never loved before, and I shall never love another."

"Mr. Dalton, you are ill—you are sick—you are mad. This is no language for me to hear, nor for you to speak. Rise, rise, I beseech you."

"Ellen, you are pale, deadly pale—you tremble—I have hurt you, wretch that I am—I have wounded, pained, offended you."

"Pained indeed," said Ellen, "but not offended. You have filled me with sorrow, Mr. Dalton—I give you *that* and my gratitude. More you do wrong in asking for; and if it had been otherwise, more I could not have given you."

The calmness of her voice and her words restored Reginald, in some measure, to his self-possession. He obeyed the last motion of her hand, and sprung at once to his feet. "You called me mad, Miss Hesketh—'twas but for a moment."

Ere he had time to say more, Miss Hesketh moved from the spot;—and Reginald, after pausing for a single instant, followed, and walked across the monastic garden, close by her side — both of them preserving total silence. A deep flush mantled the young man's countenance all over—but ere they had reached the gate, that had concentrated itself into one small burning spot of scarlet upon either cheek. She, with downcast eyes, and pale as monumental marble, walked steadily and rapidly; while he, with long and regular strides, seemed to trample, rather than to tread, the dry and echoing turf. He halted within the threshold of the ruined archway, and said, in a whisper of convulsive energy, "Halt, madam, one word more ere we part. I cannot go with you to Witham—you must say what you will to Mr. Keith. I have acted

this day like a scoundrel — a villain — you called it madness, but I cannot plead that excuse. No, madam, there was the suddenness, the abruptness of phrenzy in the avowal —but the feeling had been nurtured and cherished in calmness, deliberately fostered, presumptuously and sinfully indulged. I had no right to love you ; you behold a miserably weak and unworthy creature, who should not have dared to look on you.—But 'tis done, the wound is *here*, and it never can be healed. I had made myself unhappy, but you have driven me to the desperation of agony.—Farewell, madam, I had nothing to offer you but my love, and you did well to reject the unworthy gift—*my* love ! You may well regard it as an insult. Forget the moment that I never can forget—Blot, blot from memory the hour when your pure ear drank those poisonous sighs ! Do not pity me—I have no right to *love*—and *pity !*—no, no—forget me, I pray you—forget me and my misery.—And now, farewell once more—I am alone in the world.—May God bless you—you deserve to be happy."

He uttered these words in the same deep whisper by which he had arrested her steps. She gazed on him while he spake with an anxious eye and a glowing cheek—when he stopped, the crimson fleeted away all in an instant. Pale as death, she opened her white and trembling lips, but not a word could come. The blood rushed again over cheek, brow, and bosom, and tears, an agony of tears, streamed from her fixed and motionless eyes.

Reginald, clasping his forehead, sobbed out, "Thrice miserable ! wretch ! miserable wretch ! I have tortured an angel !"—He seized her hand, and she sunk upon the grass —he knelt over her, and her tears rained upon his hands. "O God !" he cried, "why have I lived for this hour? Speak, Ellen—speak, and speak forgiveness."

"Forgiveness !" she said—"O mock me not, Mr. Dalton ! what have I to forgive ?"

"Forgive the words that were wrung from me in bitterness of soul—Forgive me—forgive the passionate, involuntary cries of my mad anguish."

"Oh, sir, you grieve, you wound me !—you know not how you wound me. I am a poor helpless orphan, and I shall soon have no friend to lean to.—How can I listen to such words as you have spoken ?—I am grateful ; believe my tears, I am grateful indeed."

"Grateful ! for the love of mercy, do not speak so—be calm, let me see you calm."

"How can I be calm ? what can I say ? Oh, Mr. Dalton, it is your wild looks that have tortured me, for I thought I had been calm !—Oh, sir, I pray you, be yourself—do not go from me thus—I am young and friendless, and I know not what I should do or speak.—You, too, are young, and life is before you—and I hope happiness—indeed I hope so."

"Nay," said Reginald, solemnly, "not happiness—but I trust calmness to endure my misery. You may, but I cannot forget ;" and with this his tears also flowed, for hitherto not one drop had eased his burning eyelids.

Neither for a few moments said anything —at last, Ellen rubbed aside her tears with a hot and rapid hand—and "Hear me," she said, "hear me, Mr. Dalton. We are both too young—we are both inexperienced—and we have both our sorrows, and we should both think of other things. Go, sir, and do your duty in the world ; and if it *will* lighten your heart to know, that you carry with you my warmest wishes for your welfare, do take them with you. Hereafter there may come better days for us both, and then perhaps—but no, no, sir, I know 'tis folly——"

She bowed her head upon her knees—he drew her hand to his lips, and kissed it, and wept upon it, and whispered as none ever whispered twice, and was answered with a silence more eloquent even than all the whispers in the universe.

They sat together, their eyes never meeting, blushing, weeping, one in sorrow, and one in joy. Thoughts too beautiful for words, thoughts of gentlest sadness, more precious than bliss, filled them both, and gushed over and mingled in their slow calm tears.

An hour passed away, and there they were still speechless—the tears indeed had ceased to flow, and their cheeks had become as pale as their love was pure—but the fulness of their young hearts was too rich for utterance —and all seemed so like a dream, that neither had dared, even by a whisper, to hazard the dissolving of the dear melancholy charm.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"ELLEN."

"YOUNG man,"—it was so that Mr. Keith at length broke the long silence which followed Reginald's confession of what had occurred—"there is only one thing for which I can commend you. You have been guilty, I fear, of great folly, but you have acted a manly part in this free and undeferred confession."

Reginald had exhausted all his courage, and answered only by stooping his head upon the board. "Nay, nay," the old man proceeded, "it is not so that we must end it. Look up, Mr. Dalton, and hear me as calmly as I heard you. You have done what cannot be undone. I know Ellen Hesketh, and it must now rest with you whether or not, when I am gone, the world is to be a desert for her. Well do I know her heart—whatever changes, that will not change."

"I know it will not," said Reginald, fervently—"I know she will never change."

"No, sir," said the Priest; "and therefore I charge you to think seriously of the consequences of this day's work. Young man, you have done rashly, foolishly, madly, perhaps I might say more; but done it is, and I have no wish to heap useless reproaches upon your head. Nay, do not shrink from *me;* I have one duty, just one, to perform, and I will perform it."

Reginald rose from his chair, but their eyes continued fixed intensely upon each other. "At least," said he, "let me hear you say that you forgive me."

"Alas!" said the old man, extending his hand, "I would to God that were better worth your asking. Take it, young man, however—take it freely, too. It is not in anger, but in sorrow that I am to speak; and you are not to hear what I have to say as if it came from any other than the voice of kindness. But, touch the bell, if you please, for Ellen has a right to hear all this as well as you."

Reginald opened the door and called to Ellen, who came with slow and hesitating steps. The old man, as soon as she was within the room, half rose from his chair and extended his arms. She rushed into his embrace, and sobbed upon his bosom. He kissed her brow and calmed her, and made her sit down close to his knee upon his foot-stool. "My dear lassie," he said, "I have heard all, and know all. I fear you have both done wrong, but I'm not going to scold you, my love; and I just sent for you now because I have some quiet words to speak, and I thought it better you should both hear them together. Will you listen to me?"

"O, sir," said Ellen, "you are too good—too kind."

"Nay, nay, my love," he replied, "you know very well that I have no *natural* right to say anything in this matter. You know very well that 'tis only the love I have for you that gives me any title to speak."

"O, sir, you are my only friend," said the girl—"Whom have I ever had besides?—you are my friend, my father."

"My dear bairn," said the old man, "if affection made kindred, we should be near enow, I know that well; but this is no time for speeches, my poor lassie; Mr. Dalton must leave Oxford to-morrow, and there is no saying, my love—nay, you know 'tis so—there's no saying when we three may all meet again. I have something that must be said, for his sake, and for yours, and for my own; and you must just bear with me, and let me tell it in my own way."

It was of Reginald's affairs that he first spoke. He repeated and reinforced the advice he had already given to the young man to conceal nothing for one moment longer from his father; and he told him that he should not insult him by supposing that he would not tell what had happened that day as freely and as fully as anything that had gone before. He told him that he had two duties to perform, one to his father, and one to Miss Hesketh; but that the first of these was, by every title, that which he must consider, and fulfil the first.—That if he retraced his steps, exerted himself in his studies, and finished his academical career with such honour and distinction as his parts and acquirements placed easily within his reach, there need be no doubt he should be, in the course of a very few years, in a situation of perfect independence. That until he had put himself, by his own exertions, in such a situation, he certainly could not dream of forming any connection, at least without his father's consent.—That for him, therefore, the course lay clear and plain; he had nothing to do but to proceed calmly, and with determination, in the line of his duty; and so doing, he could not fail to be in due time rewarded with the consciousness of having abundantly atoned for all his early errors, and honourably earned the right to judge and act for himself.

The good Priest, having said all this gravely but inspiritingly, began in a softer and yet a more solemn tone, to touch upon the situation of Ellen Hesketh. The secret of her being in no way his own blood-relation, he had kept from her, he said, until very lately, moved to this reserve both by the consideration of her youth, and of the needless perplexity to which such a communication must give rise in her mind, and even more perhaps by the hope which he had always entertained, of being able, when he should have returned to Britain, to obtain for himself and for her, an explanation of the real secret of her birth, without which, that which he had it in his power to say, was comparatively of trivial importance either to her or to any one interested in her welfare. "But now," he said, "I feel myself, my dears (for you are both dear to me, indeed), I feel myself to be declining apace. Had I been cut off earlier by any sudden accident, I had taken care to leave in writing some memoranda of all that I can tell you; but there is no reason, as things stand, that I should satisfy myself with that; nay, I think that you might both very reasonably complain of me if I neglected, for one moment more, putting you both in possession of facts, in which I may almost say you are both alike interested. An accidental slip, Mr. Dalton, has already made you, in so far, acquainted with these matters, but you shall now hear the whole story—a sad story it is, my dears, and one that, were there nothing more, may perhaps contain lessons well deserving the consideration of ye both."—

Mr. Keith had scarcely opened his story when he was interrupted by Mrs. Wilkinson, who entered the parlour to make preparations for dinner. The interruption was, at the moment, little relished either by him or by the young people, yet, in the end, it was

perhaps a very fortunate occurrence, for the interval occupied by their simple meal enabled the old man to recover and recruit, in some measure, the strength which the incidents of the morning had so much tended to exhaust; and after a few glasses of wine had finished the repast, he was able to tell his story both more freely and more distinctly than he should have done, had he been permitted to carry it on unbroken from the commencement.

He now made Ellen bring him his little travelling-desk, and drew from it a packet of considerable size, enclosed first in a blank cover unsealed, and below in one addressed, "*For Miss Ellen Hesketh; to be opened after my death.*" He himself broke the seals, and holding the inclosure in his hand, seemed, from time to time, to refer to it for dates and other particulars, as he proceeded—occasionally reading a few sentences entirely from his MS.

"When the French Revolution began," said Mr. Keith, "I was resident at Douay, where I had been for several years engaged in the instruction of my young countrymen of the Catholic persuasion, whom the policy of the English legislature at that time condemned to seek their education abroad. We had already begun to find our situation sufficiently uncomfortable, but I believe neither myself nor any of my colleagues had contemplated such scenes of horror as afterwards did occur, when my dear and only sister, Mrs. Gordon, suddenly lost her husband in the very prime of his life; and I conceived it to be a matter of duty for me to leave my charge for a while, and pass over to Scotland, in order that I might do my endeavour to console her affliction, and also offer what assistance I could give in the arrangement of her affairs. Once on British ground, the progressive darkness of all our continental intelligence detained me there; and in the beginning of the second year, I was living a very quiet life with my sister in St. Andrews, to which place she had retired very shortly after Mr. Gordon's death. As they had no family, the estate had gone into the hands of a remote heir of entail, and my sister, scarcely beyond the flower of her youth, found herself a widow, and in circumstances far from affluent. I never had much money, my dears, and I had very little *then;* however, we had neither of us any habits of great expense, and, by combining our slender stocks, we made shift to live in a style sufficiently decent. The old city of St. Andrews was then, and probably is still, a venerable scene of desertion. The Professors of the College, indeed, and a very few respectable families, none of them much richer than ourselves, formed a small, but very agreeable, society about us; but as yet, my sister mingled little even in such quiet and simple parties as the place afforded, and, for the most part, we found our resources in each other, and in books, of which the library of the University, through the liberality of its Professors, furnished abundant supplies.

"Mr. Ralph Macdonald—your fellow-traveller, my young friend—was all that time practising as a writer (or attorney) in St. Andrews. He has since gone to Edinburgh, and thriven in the world, but then he was poorly enough off. I had known an uncle of his very intimately some years before: and Ralph and I, in the course of the months I had spent in St. Andrews, had contrived to become, in some sort, cronies, notwithstanding the different opinions we held upon everything connected with politics and religion. It was, I think, about the beginning of June I was playing at golf, a game they are very fond of in Scotland, upon the Links, when Mr. Macdonald drew me aside from the company I was engaged with, and said he had a very particular favour to solicit of me. You must know, that though my particular friends were of course well acquainted with my history and situation, I did not at that time find it convenient to be universally considered as in Catholic orders, and I wore no clerical dress; I therefore was a good deal surprised when Mr. Macdonald gave me to understand that his business with me had immediate reference to my profession.

"He told me, sir, that he had for several months been acquainted with a very beautiful young Englishwoman, of my religion, who had come to live in St. Andrews in the autumn of the preceding year. Her husband had come down with her, and they had lived together in great retirement, he said, for some little time—three or four months I think—but early in that spring he had been called away to England upon necessary business, and left instructions with Macdonald to supply her with money, and overlook her concerns during his absence. That, Macdonald said, had been protracted so much beyond what the young lady expected, that she, being in a very delicate situation, had begun to droop very much in her spirits. In short, he gave me to understand that it had been some run-away marriage, or rather that they had never been married by any clergyman, but only in the Scotch fashion, of a declaration before witnesses—one of whom he himself had been—that the young lady was afflicted with some fears of being altogether deserted by her man—and that it had occurred to him that I might be of great use in comforting and consoling her. I saw very well, from the manner in which he expressed himself—and even if that had been more cunningly guarded, I think I should have gathered from his looks—that there was some mystery, of which Mr. Macdonald knew more than he chose to express; but I considered that perhaps his professional duty might engage him to this reserve; and I saw no reason, at any

rate, why I should refuse to offer any consolation that might be in my power, to a person in the situation he had described.

"Macdonald called on me, therefore, the same evening, and carried me to see the stranger. Ellen, my dear girl, you have already guessed the truth—the name was Hesketh. She was very like what you now are yourself, my love; but her beauty had a shade upon it—a very heavy shade. She was, from her situation, pale and weakly, but sorrow was the sorest of her burdens. I do not believe mortal eye ever rested upon a more affecting picture of dejection; but listen to me calmly, my darling—her griefs, you know, whatever they might be, have all been long, long over now.

"I need not tell you, I hope, that after Mr. Macdonald had left me alone with Mrs. Hesketh, I said all I could to cheer and compose her. She was the gentlest soul in the world, and kindness, to which for some time she had been, I fear, but little accustomed, soothed her very much; but I soon saw that there was a something which kindness could not reach, and although my sister went with me next day, and continued to visit her constantly from that time forwards, neither I nor she were ever able to draw from the unfortunate lady any exact account either of what had happened between her and her husband ere they parted, or of what she imagined to be the reason of his persisting in leaving her alone. Some things I heard, indeed, which perhaps I should not even now speak of; but, after all, it was rather from putting together involuntary hints, than from any direct statement of hers, that we both became satisfied, first, that Mrs. Hesketh had to reproach herself with having quitted the protection of her friends in an improper manner; and, secondly, that she had been induced to pledge herself for keeping silence as to the true character and (such at least was our strong impression) the true name of her lover. I say lover, because, my dears, although a marriage of the kind that had taken place, according to Macdonald's account, be really quite good and legal, according to the Scotch law, yet she had been brought up in principles—no doubt she had for a certain time, in so far, lost sight of them—that taught her to undervalue, in a certain sense, the merely civil ceremony that had passed; and, in short—for why should I hesitate to speak it out?—to consider herself as in reality scarcely entitled to look upon herself as the wife of the man who had abandoned her. This was a notion, my dears, which, in one point of view, it must have been very difficult either for myself or my sister to controvert—but yet we were neither of us so bigoted, as to look on it only in that one light; and you may be sure we left no argument unused to convince our poor young friend (for such indeed we both ere long considered her), that what the law of the country she was living in had pronounced to be a binding marriage, should at least be enough to rid her mind of the severer reflections, from which, it was too plain, she had never been able to preserve herself.—But it was all in vain. Days and weeks passed on—and no word came from Mr. Hesketh, at least none that we could hear of; and at the end of two months or better, we were just as much as ever in the dark as to what was at first mysterious.

"There is an old Scotch saying, and a very true one it is, that 'the blade wears the scabbard;' and it proved so, my love, with your poor mother. Her mind, pure and good as it was, wanted that consolation which God and Nature have appointed for the help and sustenance of those in her situation; and Religion itself, my dears, could not supply this want. The more calm her distress became, the more keenly perhaps did it consume; and we soon found that all our kindest offices were of but little avail to a spirit wounded so deeply as hers had been.

"Mr. Macdonald was called from St. Andrews upon some affairs of business, and he remained absent for two or three weeks, during which we were the only visitors Mrs. Hesketh saw. Now and then we prevailed on her to come and spend the day in our house—but this was comparatively rare, and in common we were the best part of the evening in her lodgings. One afternoon, however, as it happened, she was with us—a beautiful afternoon it was—ay, I shall never forget it—a fine bright evening in the last week of August—we were all sitting together by the open window, looking out upon the sea, and it seemed to us that Mrs. Hesketh herself could not help in some measure enjoying the scene. She had never appeared so placid, so perfectly composed; I had been reading to them, and she had seemed to listen without distraction. My sister had exerted herself to be gay and cheerful; and indeed it was just one of those evenings, when it is almost impossible for the heaviest human heart not to shake off something of its load. The servant brought in some letters and a newspaper. My sister and I were reading our letters, and Mrs. Hesketh had taken the paper into her hand. After a little time I happened to look towards our friend. Oh! my dears, what a change from a few moments before! Never was such a settled cold deadly paleness—such a look of utter hopeless misery. Not a word—not a tear—not the least motion of eye or lip—but the withered stone-like steadfast gaze of utter woe. We threw water on her face—we spoke—we entreated—we prayed—but nothing could bring a single syllable from her lips. I ran out for the doctor, and when I came back, I found that my sister had had her put to bed in her own room. In short, my dear

little Ellen was born within two hours of that time; and so sickly an infant did it seem, that I was fain to comply with my sister's request, and I baptized you, my love, by your mother's bed-side at the dead of night. She was sensible of what we were doing—we saw that, although she had not spoken a word, and my sister stooped over her, and whispered a question, what name we should give her—for indeed, my dear, we did not even know what her own Christian name was. At the mention of *name*, the poor lady's tears flowed, gushing over her cheek, and it was some time ere my sister had an answer. At last she whispered, 'Not my name, my friends—no, no, not mine. Give her a better name; let her be *Ellen*.' When she had said so, her tears flowed again; but while the service was performed, she became perfectly calm and composed. But why should I vex you and myself with all these sad particulars? There was another service which soon became more necessary than that has proved to have been, and at six in the morning, our little stranger was an orphan in our home.

"But I must hasten to an end of it, sirs. When Mr. Macdonald came back, you may be sure a great deal passed between us. Mrs. Hesketh's repositories had all of course been sealed up; and two or three weeks more elapsed, ere he gave me to understand that he had received authority to open them. From whom that authority came, he would not or durst not say then—nor up to this hour has he betrayed one single iota of his secret.

"He told us, however, without delay, that the child was entirely entrusted to his keeping; and he dropt a hint, that he was provided with very sufficient means, not only for defraying all immediate expenses, but for securing the poor little orphan's independence afterwards. My sister, who had no children, as I have told you, had even by this time taken up a tender attachment to the being whom Providence seem to have placed, at the very moment of birth, under her protection. I will confess that I said what I could against the scheme—but perhaps, after all, it was not very strongly said. In a word, Mr. Macdonald became bound to pay Mrs. Gordon £40 every year, until my darling here should be of age or married, and then to make over to herself the principal sum of £800. In making this arrangement, Macdonald distinctly informed us, that he was acting by the authority of Ellen's father; and he all but told us, my love, that the name of Hesketh was an assumed one.—But this was all he would utter. To every question, every argument, every entreaty, he opposed the same determined and resolute silence. There was no authority by which I could compel him to speak; and as to my dear sister, I believe the truth of the matter was, that, after a few weeks more had passed away, she would have been as unwilling to make further inquiries, as Mr. Macdonald could possibly have been to answer them. We perceived plainly enough, that the gentleman, whoever he was, had found means effectually to make Mr. Ralph his own man; and, destitute as *we* were even of the proof of Mrs. Hesketh's having been married in any form whatever, what could we do in the business?—We did the best—at least what seemed to us to be the best—we had in our power."

The good Priest's narrative was interrupted very passionately at this point by Ellen Hesketh. She flung herself upon his neck, and wept tears of more than gratitude. The kind old man accepted the tribute of her overflowing heart in silence, and kissed off her tears as if he had indeed been her father. After a little pause, however, he raised her from his bosom, and proceeded as calmly as before.

"The rest of my story," he said, "is but little, and it is more for Mr. Dalton than my dear Ellen. She was but four years old, when I was called upon to accept of the situation which, till this last year, I have held in Germany. My widowed sister and her charge accompanied me to Fulda. Mrs. Gordon died ere Ellen could be fully sensible of that loss—and ever since, with the exception of three years spent in a nunnery among the good sisters of St. Anthony's, my little girl and I have done our best to bear the world in each other's company.

"I confess, that, when we had come over the water again, I looked with no little anxiety to a meeting with Ralph Macdonald. Who could tell what might have happened in such an interval? What changes might not have occurred? There might be a true father, willing to accept, and far better able to perform the duty, which accident had originally thrown upon myself. But I saw Macdonald—you were present, Mr. Dalton—no doubt he was willing to have some one there to cut me short in a strain that he could not take pleasure in. In a word, I found that, whatever the original causes of his reserve had been, they still continued in operation. He paid the arrears of several years which were due—but you know yourself, that our private conversation lasted but for a few minutes.

"Last week, when I first found myself seized with this illness, I made a stronger and more solemn application. Anxiously indeed, but certainly not with any very sanguine hope of success, did I await its answer. You, Mr. Dalton, were to-day the bearer of it, and you know the result—My dear girl has guessed it too. Mr. Macdonald is inflexible."

Silence on all sides, and that for a considerable space, followed the close of this narrative—nor was there any need of words to express the feelings with which Ellen, and Reginald too, had followed the good Priest to the conclusion. It was he himself who first spoke again; and notwithstanding the

fatigue which he had already undergone, he broke the silence in a firmer and loftier tone than they had yet heard from him. "And now, my dear young friends," he said, "you see how all these things stand ; you know all that I know—I am persuaded you both feel all that I would have you feel.

"Ere long," he proceeded, "I know and feel that I shall be separated from you. I trust, however, that this is not to be immediately—I hope at least to see you once more together ere I go. But be that as it may, you have my best advice now, and you have my best blessing along with it. You, Reginald Dalton, must face the world, and face it manfully, and no fear but you will soon find the benefit of virtuous exertion. As for you, my dearest Ellen, here, under this very roof, you may, I have no doubt, find a safe shelter —you will not have riches, but at least you have the means of independence—and this letter of itself would be sufficient to insure you that.

"Nay, nay, my darling," said the old man, "you must not take things thus. Be calm—let us all be calm—we must not make this parting more dismal than it needs to be."

In vain, however, did Mr. Keith endeavour to dispel any part of the cloud that hung and deepened over both. Every slender effort on their side served only to make the pressure, which it could not remove, more heavily and hopelessly felt. The newly-risen moon sent but a dim and feeble ray into the chamber, and their sad spirits communed but the more intensely, because eye could not fathom the blank gaze of eye.

At length the hour came when parting could no longer be deferred. Reginald, when he heard the clock strike nine, rose, and in silence grasped the hands of them both. The Priest returned the pressure with trembling fingers, but fervidly.—Poor Ellen s hand returned no pressure, but soul spoke to soul in the warm passive thrill that shook beneath his touch. He withdrew his hand, whispering inaudibly. She leapt up, and stood for a moment ; but ere he had passed the threshold, which he did with hurried footsteps, she had sunk again, and the old father's arms had received her. Reginald, although he knew that he was already far too late, could not pass unvisited the ruins that lay between him and his boat. The gates were by this time all locked, but he leapt the wall, and stood in pride and in sorrow upon the spot where the eye of Love had read Love's silent answer. Calm grief was blended with deep shame ; but now grief and shame did not fill the heart where they had long been seated.—A soft soothing feeling was ineffably mixed with them, even in the darkest places of their dominion. Lofty kindling dreams hovered over that scene ; and Reginald lamented the errors of his boyhood with the noble sorrow of a man. He felt that he had a destiny of trouble to grapple with ; but a ray of light now shone on the coming struggle, and pointed to the issue. A pensive voluptuousness diffused its influence all over his imagination, without depressing its sterner enthusiasm. He kissed the sacred spot — he shed some big tears, drop by drop, upon the turf—and tore himself from the scene.

The moon was riding high in the heaven, and her long line of light trembling on the surface of the dark deep river, seemed to point the way before his prow. With firm and resolute strength did his oars cleave the waters. Gazing upon the unclouded sky and that glorious planet, he tore his way fiercely, the full current assisting his energy. At length he was within the shadow of buildings —he paused, unconscious of the progress he had been making, and allowed himself to be drifted with the stream until he reached the bridge of Isis.

He paced for an hour slowly and solemnly beneath the mighty beeches of his College gardens, ere he could bring himself to go to bed. Then, exhausted as he was in mind and in body, sleep came swiftly to his pillow.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FUNERAL.

REGINALD, in a state of spirits that rendered any kind of exertion more agreeable to him than repose, performed the far greater part of the journey that commenced next morning, without halting. Seated on the top of the mail-coach, which was uniformly crowded without and within, he was, to all intents and purposes, as much alone as if he had been in a desert Trees and fields, and villages and cities, glided past in succession, without arresting the stream of his thoughts. The sun rose and set upon eyes scarcely conscious of any difference between light and darkness, so completely was he wrapt in meditations, varying indeed, but not varying in the intensity of their command over him.

His purpose had been to proceed alone to Lannwell, where he did not doubt his father would be ere he could reach it. But as the coach stopped for breakfast very early in the third morning, he was addressed abruptly, while standing near the vehicle upon the street of Lancaster, by a servant in deep mourning, whose face he at once remembered having seen at Gryphérwast Hall. The man, though his address was abrupt, had been surveying Reginald for several minutes ere he spoke ; for, to say truth, our young friend's exterior had undergone very considerable changes during the months that had intervened. At last, however, he had satisfied himself that it was no other than Reginald, and having done so, he said at once, without

preface,—"I crave your pardon, Mr. Dalton; but you're not going on with the coach, surely, when your father's at the Hall, and this the very day of my master's funeral?"

Reginald's answer was as abrupt as the address. "Not for the world — I had no notion the funeral could have been deferred so long."

"Ah! sir," said the man, "then you did not know that Mr. Ward had to come all the way from London?"

"I knew nothing of the matter," quoth Reginald. "I never heard of the gentleman you mention."

"Just wait for a moment, Mr. Dalton, and I'll tell him you are here; and, in the mean time, will you have your luggage taken from the coach?"

Reginald had scarcely seen his portmanteau unfastened, ere the servant came back and told him that Mr. Ward would be very happy to carry him on in his carriage to Grypherwast. "He," the man added, "is just dressing for the funeral, sir, and perhaps you might as well do the same, for we shall have little enough time to spare afterwards."

Reginald said he would instantly dress himself; and with that the man took leave of him, observing, that his errand had been to ascertain the exact time at which Mr. Ward might be expected, and that he must now ride back to the Hall as quickly as he could.

The melancholy aspect of this servant, and the knowledge that he himself was, in the course of a few hours, to be present at that sorrowful scene, brought the whole matter more home to his imagination than as yet it had been. While arraying himself in his black clothes, he lost sight, for the first time, of his own more personal griefs—or at least these only served to deepen the seriousness with which a Dalton looked forward to the obsequies of a Dalton. Even the thought that he was so near the half-desired, half-dreaded meeting with his father, made comparatively but a slender impression on him. Or rather, perhaps, the truth might be, that, taken as he had been by surprise, his mind had not leisure to work upon more than what had been so suddenly suggested, and was so immediately to be encountered.

However all this might be, he had scarcely completed his toilet when a waiter knocked at his door, and said that Mr. Ward sent his compliments, and was waiting breakfast for him below. He immediately obeyed the summons, and was ushered into Mr. Ward's parlour. An old gentleman of mild aspect, but with rather formal manners, advanced to meet him, and bowing low as he presented his hand, said,—"Our forefathers were better acquainted, Mr. Dalton, but our blood will not let us be strangers."

Reginald answered, very respectfully,—"I am ashamed to say, sir, that I had not been aware of all my advantages."

"Nay," replied the senior, "fortune has separated me from my old friends so long, that it is no wonder my young ones should be ignorant of me; but no matter, that may soon be mended. My name, however, can scarcely be quite new to you."

"Indeed, sir," said Reginald, "it is not me that you must blame—but it is so."

"Well, well," said Mr. Ward, "we shall have time enough to talk over some very old stories as we go to Grypherwast. In the mean time, let us take our coffee, for I have ordered the carriage."

During the little time they remained together in the inn, Mr. Ward asked a variety of questions, which showed Reginald that he was in so far acquainted with the state of his family—although he had never seen the Vicar of Lannwell, and had not met the late Squire of Grypherwast for more than forty years past. This puzzled him a good deal; but there was a sort of stiffness about the old gentleman's appearance, that prevented him from putting questions in return; and, besides, as we have already seen, Reginald's thoughts were not entirely at his own command. The scantiness of the boy's breakfast was not unnoticed by Mr. Ward; and that, together with the hectic flush on his cheek, seemed to have given him the idea that he was ill. "I am much afraid," he said, "that you have been travelling too rapidly.—Take care of yourself," he added, with a smile. "I promise I shall take it very ill if *you* ever cost me a trip to the north."

Reginald answered to this by a look which showed that he could not comprehend Mr. Ward's meaning. "Ay," proceeded the old gentleman, "I see that you really are quite in the dark, my young friend."

Nothing more was said until they were seated in the carriage; and even then it was by slow and gradual approaches that Mr. Ward reached the story, which, when he did reach it, effectually fixed the attention and the interest of his juvenile hearer. Very shortly, it was this:—

Two English knights, a Dalton and a Ward, were brothers in arms during the wars of John of Gaunt in Spain. After a battle, which had lasted from sunrise to sunset, the enemy had fled discomfited, and the English and Gascon chivalry remained masters of a dearly-purchased field. Sir Hugh Ward, returning from the pursuit, found his friend and brother bleeding to death beneath a tree. They had time to embrace and to exchange their blessings and their farewells, and Dalton said to Ward,—"My friend, you will bury me here where I have fallen, but carry my heart with you, if you survive the war, to England, and lay it with your own hands in my father's tomb." The weeping knight kissed the crosslet of his sword in token of his promise. The dying soldier raised himself from the ground to receive the pledge, and said, with the last

ray of chivalrous affection in his eye,—"One promise more. If you die an old man at home, let my son repay the debt and bury you." That, too, was promised, and Dalton sunk and expired upon his friend's cuirass.

Ward returned in safety to England, and carried Dalton's heart to St. Judith's. When he died, the son of his friend laid his head in the grave—and so, from that time downwards, it had ever been the custom, that, when Dalton of Grypherwast died, it was Ward of Langthorpe — when Ward it was Dalton — that acted as the chief mourner. The families held estates within a few miles of each other —they had often inter-married—and, during the long series of centuries that had passed, neither had ever been prevailed upon to break this sacred and hereditary compact.—It was by such ties as these, that, in many instances, the noble benevolence of the old English gentry among themselves was sustained and nourished. It was the influence of such remembrances that often tempered the asperities of political conflict, and softened and refined the character even of civil war itself. Thus, for example, the heads of these very races had happened to embrace different sides in the time of Charles I.—they fought against each other at Edgehill—and yet, when Sir Marmaduke Dalton was slain before Newark Castle, Colonel Ward asked and obtained permission to accompany the corpse to Lancashire, and, stern republican though he was, rendered the last honours to the young cavalier—*more majorum*.

The father of Reginald's companion had been a foolish and speculating man—so much so, that his estate, which came at first into his hands with many burthens upon it, was almost entirely dissipated by the time he died. He neither lived extravagantly, nor encountered electioneering, nor gambled—nor did anything glaringly ruinous — but, merely from being cursed with the itch of experiment and improvement, he had contrived, in the course of thirty long years, to do what mere indolence and neglect could not, in all probability, have accomplished. His eldest son had the good luck to die before him ; so that the family was now represented by a person, whose early destination had been business, and who therefore could sustain himself far better than a mere elder brother could have done under the loss, still certainly most grievous, of so fair and so ancient an inheritance. In a word, Mr. George Ward, on his return from India, where he had served for many years as a civilian, found the estate gone beyond redemption ; but this had only served as a new stimulus to his exertions. He had, without even visiting Lancashire, gone back to India—resumed his employment —and laboured even more diligently during his latter years, than he had done during the first vigour of his manhood. But now, at length, he had finally abandoned the East. Though not rich (for an old Indian), he had realised a very handsome competence—and being unmarried and alone in the world, he had fixed his residence in London.—Often, during the last two years, had he projected a visit to the north—but feelings of reluctance, such as may easily be imagined, had deferred this from month to month, and from season to season. These, however, had not interfered with what he considered, and well might he do so, as a duty. The late Mr. Dalton had occasionally corresponded with him by letter, and had signified, it appeared, his desire, that the loss of Langthorpe should not affect the old relations between the families. The landless man, after the absence of more than half a lifetime, was just about to breathe the air of his native valley, for the purpose of discharging the last rites to one whom he had not seen since his boyhood.

It has already been mentioned, that he was a man of mild but formal aspect. In truth, his life had not been an easy, nor, upon the whole, could it be said to have been a fortunate one ; and perhaps considering that, and the nature of the employments in which he had been chiefly engaged, there might have been no great reason to wonder, even although, with something of the stiffness of office, he had brought back some shade of the severity of disappointment. This, however, was not so. Mr. Ward's smile was exceedingly gentle, and everything about him spoke the well-regulated and placid mind. It has been often remarked, that the life of British India is, beyond any other mode of colonial existence, favourable to the manners of British adventurers. This man could not be in any way regarded as an adventurer—but, nevertheless, even on him, and such as him, the habitudes of Asiatic magnificence are apt to stamp their traces—and there was certainly about his demeanour, formal though it seemed on the surface, not a little of that Eastern gracefulness, which we must all have admired in so many of those who look back from an English old age, and from amidst the noise and tumult of a free country, upon years of active manhood spent amongst the silence of slaves, and soothed by all the stately luxuries of rule.

He told the old history of the families—and hinted somewhat of his own less romantic history—in a style of great simplicity—but, somehow or other, although he mentioned nothing but the facts, there was that in his manner that abundantly supplied the place of comment. In short, our young man could not listen to him without perceiving, that, beneath the prudent surface of age and experience, there glowed the suppressed fires of sentiment—and he, in his turn, had *tact* enough to show his sense of this, as well as his sympathy, by looks rather than by words.

They had been travelling together in this manner for rather more than an hour, when

a sudden turn of the road brought them close to a small river, one or two windings of which Reginald had already caught glimpses of from a distance. Mr. Ward, at the sight of the water, leaned back in the carriage, and, still, however, keeping his eyes upon the clear and glassy stream, beat the time of "Barbara Allen" slowly and softly upon his road-book. The scenery was getting more and more beautiful every instant—so that it was some time ere our youth had any leisure to notice his fellow-traveller's behaviour. At length, however, the old man sighed very deeply, and Reginald, turning round with unconscious hastiness, saw enough at one glance to make him aware, that his eyes had better look any other way than towards Mr. Ward.

They were driving, as I have said, close by the margin of the river. The opposite bank had been losing more and more the character of roughness as they advanced, and now the limpid stream was flowing on the level of a smooth lawn, which bore every semblance of elaborate culture. Old melancholy oaks stood sprinkled here and there—some of them almost dropping their boughs into the water. Another turn, and a stately old mansion, covered entirely with fruit-trees, appeared within half a stone-cast of the river. The space between the house and the water was occupied by a succession of green turfen terraces. A lady and a gentleman were walking arm in arm on that nearest the house—close by the river some children were wheeling a garden-chair. Their young voices could be heard distinctly—and Mr. Ward's sigh was the echo of a burst of their laughter. Reginald looked once more at the old man.—His eye was still fixed—there was a motion upon his pale lip, and the boy needed no road-book to inform him that this was Langthorpe Hall. He also leaned backwards and surveyed the lovely prospect with a kindred sadness.

Mr. Ward, who had no notion that Reginald had discovered Langthorpe solely from his own looks, seemed to rouse himself as if by a sudden exertion, just as some intervening trees were about to shut both the river and the old domain from their view. "Yes, my young friend," he said, "everything you see is unchanged. The turf wears the same green it did when *my* father's children played upon it. These oaks, that had seen hundreds of years then, are not a whit more faded now. These new people have had the good taste to leave even the house and the gardens as they used to be, and yet I know not whether I should not have been better pleased if they had altered them."

"Nay, sir," said Reginald, "as to that I cannot agree with you. Had they done so, they must have been savages."

"Well, well," said Mr. Ward, with a smile, "I believe you are in the right, and I in the wrong. I cannot judge, to say truth, what my feelings should have been, had I seen a fine new house staring down upon a levelled bank and winding gravel walks. Has Grypherwast Hall undergone any of these mutations?"

"I believe," said Reginald, "you will find it very much as it was formerly. I myself never saw it, however, until last autumn."

"Never saw Grypherwast Hall until last autumn!" The old gentleman said these words quickly, and stopped short after he had done so, as if afraid that he had said something improper. But Reginald, who penetrated his thoughts, proceeded,—"And I am sure of one thing, sir," he said, "and that is, I could not bear to see Grypherwast other than what it is."

"Very right, very right, indeed," said Mr. Ward; "I hope, when you are the Squire yourself, you won't change your mind?"

"*I* the Squire!—Nay, Mr. Ward, you must know better—you should not say so."

The old gentleman started at the deep bitterness of the boy's accent, and for a few miles nothing more was said, either by the one or the other of them. Tall and luxuriant woods edged the road on either hand, and big branches meeting overhead, made their noonday progress as dark as if the sun had set. They sat together in silence, each, doubtless, devoured with thoughts as gloomy. At once they were beyond the wood and upon the brow of the hill. The village-green lay before them—the cottages—the stream—the gardens—and beyond, among ascending groves, the old tower of Grypherwast. The sky was cloudless—the sun was shining in the full fervour of his summer strength, and all around there was a Sabbath-like silence. The peasants, as they drove rapidly through the hamlet, appeared clustered together in listless groups, while, from time to time, the church-bell tolled—every note, such were the intervals, and so profound the stillness, coming upon the ear with increased solemnity.

There was a crowd, but not the least confusion, about the gate of the park. Everybody bowed respectfully as they drove past; the curiosity of many glances was no doubt vulgar, but the general expression was an humble, indeed, but nevertheless a steadfast and a noble seriousness of regret. "Alas!" said Reginald to himself, "much as I ought to have felt, how little should I have either felt or understood, had I not come hither!" Meantime, they had reached the door, and the carriage stopped.

They were received in silence. One of the servants, that lined the porch, left his place, and preceded them, without saying a word, into a chamber where Sir Charles Catline was sitting alone. Mr. Ward whispered to Reginald on the threshold, "Your father, I suppose?" and without waiting for an answer, went up, and extending his hand, was just saying to Sir Charles, "Mr. Dalton, believe

me——" when the Vicar of Lannwell himself entered the room from the other side, and Reginald, instantly folded in his embrace, had other things to think of than the explanation which ensued. Immediately afterwards, however, he led his father to Mr. Ward, and exchanged, himself, a recognition of much courtesy with the Baronet. Scarcely anything was said—but how various and how powerful were at the moment the feelings of these four —The Vicar, amidst his, whatever might be their conflict, had eyes, it may be believed, to observe the altered and improved person and carriage of his son—and the circumstances under which he saw the boy were such, that the settled gloom upon his features could excite neither surprise nor suspicion.

After a few minutes had elapsed, Sir Charles Catline, who evidently carried himself as master, asked Mr. Ward, if it were not better that the service should be proceeded in without further delay. Being answered by a bow of acquiescence, the Baronet led the way into another apartment, where a numerous company of the neighbouring gentry were already assembled. It was Sir Charles who first entered the crowded circle ; but the moment he had mentioned the name of Mr. Ward, it was upon that stranger among strangers that every eye was fixed. They all knew who he was—and while every one was able to detect in him the features of a race that had passed away, but could not be forgotten, he was anxiously, but in vain, endeavouring to retrace, in grey-headed men, the companions of his boyhood, unseen since then. A painful sort of perplexity was the only result of the eager gaze he threw once and again around the circle—but there was no time for question or answer—the procession was almost instantly in motion, and he found himself walking at the head of it, between Sir Charles Catline and the Vicar.

The distance being so inconsiderable, no use was made either of hearse or carriages. Gentry and tenantry followed the bier on foot. Not a whisper disturbed the silence of the old wood through which they moved.

They reached the open space among the firs—a wide semi-circle was formed upon the turf—the Priest, and a few others, surrounded the new-made grave within the ruined chapel —and the most majestic service of the English ritual was read in a clear calm voice, beneath the shadow of those gigantic pines. All around was sorrow—but it was the sorrow that attends an *old* man to his grave. Tears might be seen streaming down some aged cheeks—but, on the whole, perhaps, the most painful feelings that prevailed there, were those which the reader may easily imagine to have been excited among such an assemblage, by the circumstances under which the last of the Wards and the two last of the Daltons made their appearance. Sir Charles Catline, and the new proprietor of Langthorpe, could they have read human eyes, would probably have kept most of their looks for each other.

The solemn ceremonial being at an end, Mr. Ward was soon surrounded with a variety of persons, who could no longer defer the attempt to bring about some recognition on his part of old acquaintance, by convincing him how far it was from being, at least in one sense, true that "the place which had known him knew him no more." Sir Charles, meanwhile, had turned to Mr. Dalton and his son, and was, with an excess of civility that might almost, all things considered, be taken for ostentatious, reminding them, that it was expected they should stay that night at Grypherwast Hall!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE VICAR ADMINISTERS CONSOLATION.

HAD Mr. Dalton consulted his own feelings alone, he certainly would not have consented to remain even that day at the Hall. The presence of Sir Charles, above all under such circumstances, was disagreeable to him ; and, to say nothing of the natural desire he felt to be alone with his son after so long a separation, the bustle of company was little in harmony with the tone which recent incidents had given to his mind. He considered, however, that he was now the nearest male relation Mrs. Elizabeth had in the world, and, more particularly, foreseeing as he did, that future visits to Grypherwast must be neither frequent nor easy, he was anxious at once to have an interview with her, and make personal offer of all his services. With this view, he assented to Sir Charles Catline's proposal, and immediately sent a note to the old lady, informing her of his wishes. Her maid brought, in return, a verbal message, that she should endeavour to see the Vicar in the course of the evening, and that she hoped to see Reginald also ere they took their departure.

The Vicar had already been informed that he had been left one of the Squire's executors, and, as such, he had some necessary business to transact, in company with Catline and two other gentlemen of the neighbourhood. And between this, and other circumstances not worth detailing, it so happened, that the young man and his father had scarcely any opportunity of seeing each other, until they were seated at the dinner-table. A large party, according to the custom of Lancashire on such occasions, surrounded it ; and Sir Charles presided over a splendid entertainment, in the midst of many fawning, and some sullen guests.

On Mr. Ward, who sat on his right hand, the Baronet lavished at first every species of attention ; but, from whatever cause, the old gentleman seemed to receive them with extreme coldness. During dinner, his eyes

were continually wandering about the room—perhaps he could not help recalling scenes of a different sort that his young eyes had witnessed there—perhaps there was a melancholy pleasure in renewing his acquaintance with the apartment itself—perhaps he had recognised some old friends among the portraits with which the walls were crowded. The politeness of Sir Charles prevented him from pressing conversation where silence seemed to be preferred; but there were bluff talkative squires there, that could understand little of such delicate matters, and who were not so easy to be got rid of. Even young Reginald could not help being pained, when he heard with what well-meant pertinacity these good people were pestering the old gentleman, whose courtesy left him defenceless in their hands—how solemnly they prosed out their dull reminiscences—how broadly, abruptly, and coarsely they questioned—how their curiosity destroyed their kindness—and how the tender mercies of their condolence were cruel.

To say truth, our youth was in a very irritable frame;—a thousand painful trains of thought were continually crossing each other;—his own errors—the approaching necessity of confession—what wonder, if these were doubly wormwood as he met the serious and sad, indeed, but gentle and unsuspecting, glance of his parent? What wonder, if he was willing to conceal, even from himself, something of this merited bitterness, by wilful and saturnine brooding upon other griefs? What wonder, if it was a sort of relief to him, in casting his eye round the hall of his ancestors, perhaps, as he thought, for the last time, to say to himself, "At least it is no fault of mine that banishes us *hence?*" When he surveyed the company, all looking, no doubt, very grave and decorous, but all eating and drinking just as lustily as if the Squire had been at the foot of his own table—when he saw Sir Charles Catline bowing in stately courtesy, and, he could not help suspecting, in suppressed triumph at its head—and then met the mild and melancholy affection of his father's eye, or the perhaps deeper, though more restrained, sadness of Mr. Ward's, what wonder, if this keen and strong imagination almost exulted in its own writhings! The presence of Mr. Ward was indeed a strong additional stimulus to what would, in his absence, have been more than sufficiently awake. It seemed as if he had been there that day not merely to perform one duty, however rich in associations that duty might be, but to represent, as it were, the whole body of those old recollections that were about to be banished for ever from these venerable scenes. In him Reginald saw not his noble and benevolent ancestry alone, but the type of thoughts, feelings, modes of existence cherished for ages, and on the eve of extirpation—the last relic of days that should no more return—the last Ward at the tomb of the last Dalton. "For us, for him and us," he said to himself, "what henceforth shall we have to do with these fond memories? We were the children of the soil—what was well here, would be but mockery elsewhere than under the shadow of our forefathers' trees. Henceforth Ward and Dalton are two empty sounds."

Mr. Ward had spent several hours before dinner in talking with persons well acquainted with the situation and prospects of the Vicar and his family. His eye was incessantly encountering that of our young man; but how much that told, or how little it needed to tell him, we shall not pretend to guess for the present.

Reginald drank a great deal of wine in the course of that evening, for his body and his mind were alike in a state of fever. That perilous resource, however, had for once no power, except that of adding fuel to fire. Almost in spite of himself his nerves remained untouched, and his brain glowed without being clouded.

At length the party broke up, and just as they were about to leave the dining-room, a messenger from Mrs. Elizabeth whispered the Vicar. He was about to go up-stairs immediately to her chamber, but Mr. Ward stopped him, by saying that he must be gone from Grypherwast without farther delay. Sir Charles Catline expostulated. Mr. Dalton did so too, it may be believed, though in a different tone, but it was all alike in vain. The old gentleman was evidently anxious to escape from a place where he could have few pleasing meditations; and the way in which he spoke—or rather the way in which he suppressed his thoughts—was such, that it was impossible to argue with him. They lingered under the porch for some minutes, until his carriage drove up. Mr. Ward then took leave of Sir Charles and the other gentlemen present; but his parting with the Vicar and Reginald was not the work of a moment.—He drew them aside from all the rest, as if he had had something secret to say; yet when it came to the point, his habitual reserve seemed to thicken and close about him, so that he could utter nothing but what might have been uttered in the hearing of the whole company—expressions of kind interest in the fortunes of a family, with whose ancestors his own had so many friendly relations—and an invitation to consider his house as head-quarters, whenever one or both of them should be in London. To Reginald, in particular, he repeated this once and again, even after he had got into his chaise.

The youth, when his father had gone into the house for the purpose of visiting Mrs. Dalton, was left quite alone—and he felt a strong disinclination to rejoin immediately Sir Charles and his friends. He therefore walked away into the woods by himself. The evening was beautiful in the extreme. A rich

twilight filled the air—and deep silence accorded everywhere with the deepening solemnity of nature. The coolness of the hour, and the darkness of the ancestral groves, soothed and composed his agitated spirits—and a pensive sadness was felt almost as luxury, after the hot and angry irritation to which his bosom had been giving way.

Long did he stroll with languid and slow steps among those venerated bowers, whose shade he thought it most probable he should never again revisit. Long he indulged in the sorrowful delight of gazing from the hill-top over the fair domain fading beneath his view. Long, ere the risen moon warned him that his father might be astonished by his absence, did he pause beside the brook of St. Judith's, watching, until his eyes were dim and weary, the sepulchre where it was never to be *his* destiny to sleep. At last he roused himself from the melancholy dream, and began to walk through the pine-grove towards the Hall.

He had passed the gloomy firs, and was advancing along a winding path, bordered on both sides with shrubs and evergreens, when he was surprised by hearing voices near him—gay voices they seemed to be, though little more than whispering—and the next moment a sort of kindly titter came distinctly to him through the leaves. Reginald *instinctively* coughed and trod heavily, that he might not be obliged to play the eaves-dropper—and accordingly he immediately perceived that his motion had excited the notice of these whisperers, whoever they might be. The next moment a turn of the path brought him full upon them, and the moon showed him quite plainly a young gentleman and a young lady, both in black, the latter seated on a garden bench, and the former standing a step forwards from her on the walk—having evidently, from his attitude, risen the instant before from her side. Reginald half paused—but he felt instantly that that was far worse than going on—and on he went. To turn his eyes right towards them would have been wrong, because implying curiosity—to turn them quite away would have been wrong, because as clearly implying suspicion—and it was impossible to keep a middle course in the matter, without recognising Miss Catline—whose being at Grypherwast, by the way, was entirely unknown to him—and Mr. Collins, who, he had supposed, was still in the house with Sir Charles and the rest of the company.—[The reader may remember Mr. Collins, a young clerical gentleman, mentioned in a preceding part of this history.]—This gentleman answered Reginald's hasty bow with one even hastier—but as for the young lady, she did not show any symptom of recognition. Mr. Collins stammered out something about the weather, to which our young man made a suitable answer, and then walked on, quickening his pace—for indeed he felt almost as much hurt as either of the others could have done.—He saw at once that there was something of a flirtation—he thought, to be sure, that Miss Catline might have done as well to suspend it for that night at least—but still what had he to do with the matter? He was sorry, because he apprehended that his involuntary intrusion might have given pain—but that was the only idea that crossed his mind; for, so far from dreaming of betraying the secret, such as it was, it did not even occur to him, that either of those concerned could dream of its being possible for him to do so.

Perhaps, for why should the truth be concealed, Reginald derived some little amusement from this little affair, a minute or two after it was over. I believe, if this was wickedness, he was guilty; nay, I even suspect that his offence went further than this. The variety of irritating and painful reflections with which he had been occupied, had probably enough left such a mind in a fit condition for the reception of a certain saturnine species of mirth. Nay, perhaps a little of positive malice might chequer it—perhaps the thought might occur, and, occurring, might minister not unpleasantly to his galled imagination,—"Sir Charles Catline may perhaps live to rue the day when he first stooped to make religion the cloak of worldly craft. If pride has not altogether been banished from his breast, he will yet repent his skill."

It is probable that some such reflections had prompted the bitter smile that sat on his lips, as he re-entered the room where Catline and his party were assembled. They were just sitting down to supper. "My dear Mr. Reginald," said the Baronet, "what can have become of you?—but indeed we are deserted on every hand. Mr. Dalton has been these two hours with Mrs. Elizabeth—and Mr. Collins too, I believe, has been about as long with my sister.

"Ay, Sir Charles," observed one of the guests, "it is on such occasions that people feel what, in hours of joy, we are all too apt to lose sight of."

To which the Baronet responded with a very pious sigh—and Reginald Dalton by something that was not unlike a titter, whatever it might be meant for.

The Vicar of Lannwell, meanwhile, was engaged in a conversation with Mrs. Elizabeth, that interested and occupied him too much, to admit of his thinking about the supper party below-stairs. When he first entered her chamber, he was received with no noisy or vehement lamentations—for sister, indeed, had never loved brother more tenderly—but Mrs. Elizabeth had outlived the period of emotion, too violent to be restrained or concealed; long experience of life had taught effectually those lessons which it seldom fails to impress on well-constituted spirits; and besides, nay, perhaps more than all, she had

reached an age, at which no such separation can be regarded as likely to be of long endurance. She received him as a priest, and as a kinsman, with dejection willing to be soothed, and with affection clinging the more closely, because so little now remained to divide its embrace. He, in his turn, answered both of these feelings as it became him—he spake as a friend and as a Christian—the religious elevation which he strove to kindle and sustain, beamed visible in his own eyes; and while thoughts, tender at once and lofty, poured from his lips, the good old lady saw and felt that self and the world had no power to check, at such a moment, the tide of hallowed sentiment within his breast. The soft yet cheering tone of his voice sounded like the richest music to her ear—she listened with eyes mildly glistening—her heart, her deeply wounded heart, experienced that mood, without which the world would be intolerable—that indescribable, ineffable state of mind, wherein human sympathy and heavenly hope are able, in their combined influence, not merely to assuage, but almost to convert into luxury, the natural sorrows of our frail humanity.

Aware that the more he could divide her interest, the more effectually he should accomplish his good work; and influenced, no doubt, at the same time, by his own paternal feelings of love and pride, the Vicar began to speak of his restored son—and he spake of him with a boldness of commendation, to which nothing but a deep and undoubting sense of sympathy could have prompted even him.—From whatever cause, however, this new topic appeared to have any effect rather than that it had been intended to produce. Mrs. Elizabeth listened indeed with an expression of maternal interest and satisfaction to the boy's praises—but when the father stopped, he was answered in a strain of energy, such as he could scarcely hear without something like self-reproach. The placid composure of melancholy sat no longer upon her features—the pale cheek of age glowed—and, with sudden and abrupt violence, she at once poured out a stream of emotion, which, contrasted with the preceding calmness of her sorrow, agitated and even alarmed him.

"And this noble boy," she said, without a word of preface—"this dear and noble boy of ours, he and you, John Dalton, are both to be robbed of the rightful inheritance of your fathers—and by whom? By a stranger to our blood, a crafty stranger, a cunning, sneaking hypocrite. Oh, sir! when I think of this, it is then indeed that I am unhappy. I am old, and I shall not see it—but the folly of a single girl will be the ruin of our house. I foresee it all—there is now nothing to check their artifice—Sir Charles Catline became master here in the very moment that my dear brother breathed his last."

"My dear madam," said the Vicar, "I pray you to be calm.—Even if it be as you apprehend, it is our duty to acquiesce in that over which we have no control. I trust, I and my boy shall be enabled, under whatever circumstances, to conduct ourselves so as to bring no discredit upon our forefathers."

"It is all over," she proceeded. "You need not speak to me, John Dalton—I know perfectly well that it is all over. Catline and his daughter came here, ere my brother was cold upon his pillow—and they have never left Grypherwast since—and they will never leave it again. I know Barbara—I know the weakness of her nature—I know that, ere a few more weeks be gone, they will be able to make her do anything they please. That girl is as artful as her father—Barbara loves her—she loves her more than all the world besides—she loves her as if she were her own child—and now, she is so nervous, so timid, so unable to be without constant support, that I am sure she will very soon cease to have any will but what this girl and her father choose to suggest."

"My dearest Mrs. Elizabeth," said the Vicar, "will you allow me to speak freely a thought that has been all this day in my mind?"

"Speak, cousin; I have nobody else to listen to; you and your boy are all that I now have in the world to think of—for as for my poor Barbara, dear as she is to me, how can I think calmly of what she is about to do?—Speak to me—speak all your mind—we are alone together in the world."

"You are not likely to enjoy Grypherwast now—will you quit it at once, and come with me to Lannwell? There, my dear madam, you will at least have the repose of *home*."

Mrs. Elizabeth met the Vicar's filial look with a gaze of surprise and gratitude—a tear started in her eye—but the moment afterwards she wiped it away hurriedly. She extended her hand towards him, and he pressed it with ready warmth. "No, no," she said (her voice trembled at first, but it soon regained strength and composure),—"No, no, my dear friend, I feel your affectionate kindness—I feel it indeed—but it cannot be thus."

"I am sure, ma'am," said Mr. Dalton, "your presence would be to us the highest pleasure—but if you have other views, I beg pardon—I shall never say a word more of it."

"No, John Dalton," she replied, "I beg you will not. But you have a right to hear, and to *you* I will speak. It shall never be said that I left my brother's child unbidden. It is my duty to endure anything else, provided her kindness to me does not fail. I owe one sacred duty to her—to her father—to our common blood, and I shall not shrink from it out of any consideration of myself alone."

The Vicar bowed as if to renew his apology—but without apparently observing the mo-

tion, Mrs. Elizabeth turned round in her chair, and pointed with her finger to the window. The twilight had deepened into night during their conference, and now the moon had risen gloriously, and the oak-trees, and the wide lawn, and the wooded hill, lay full in view—clothed all over as with a garment, in the softness of the light. The old lady gazed for a while in silence—and then, without turning her eyes from the window, she said in a whisper—Mr. Dalton, somehow or other, could not help doubting whether she had meant herself to be heard—"No, no, my hour is not come yet—come when it will, it shall find me *here*."

Mrs. Elizabeth, after a pause of some moments, rose from her chair, and moved towards the window. The Vicar, almost unconscious of what he was doing, rose too, and placed himself by her side. They both continued for some space looking out in silence upon the beautiful landscape. At length, the lady roused herself suddenly from her reverie, and said, "I fear you think me a very foolish old soul, John Dalton—but there's no great matter, after all. 'Tis getting late, I believe, and I would fain see Reginald ere we part."

The Vicar went down-stairs immediately. He opened the parlour-door, and saw his son sitting in the midst of Sir Charles's company. He retreated without being observed, and sent in a servant to whisper in Reginald's ear, that he wanted to speak with him. He led the young man to Mrs. Betty's room—she was still standing on the same spot where he had left her, and it was only their entrance that changed her attitude.

When she turned round, however, to receive the boy, Mr. Dalton, even by the indistinct moonlight, could see enough to convince him that she had been shedding tears during his short absence. She tried to master her emotions, whatever they were—but perhaps she had already struggled too much in that way; at all events, she now succeeded very indifferently in her efforts. She kissed Reginald's cheek, and said very passionately, "God bless my dear boy!"—and then the old lady could no longer contain herself. Her tears burst freely over her cheek—and she wept aloud. With what terrible effect does not the audible sorrow of old age—above all, of strong and firm old age—pierce the ear of youth! To what a height has not their emotion gone, ere it overflows in tears! Their tears are not like those that rise easily within young eyes, and gush softly over unfurrowed cheeks. It is a strong cord that draws up the water from that deep and exhausted well. The pity that listens to such lamentation is mingled with awe—it is heard in silence, because it cannot be interrupted without irreverence. It was so with the Vicar—it was so, still more acutely, with Reginald. His spirit was already an agitated one; it was and had been torn with a hundred violent and painful feelings, to which the pure bosom of his parent had given no access. With him there needed but one drop more to make the cup run over.

Mr. Dalton, observing Reginald's behaviour, motioned to him with his hand. Mrs. Elizabeth drew the boy once more towards her—kissed him again and again—and then sobbing out her blessing upon them both, she made a sign that she would have them withdraw, and sunk into her chair. They both obeyed the motion—the door was closed behind them—Mr. Dalton whispered a few hurried words to Reginald, and parted with him at the door of his bed-chamber.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A HALF CONFESSION.

AT a very early hour next morning, the Vicar pulled aside his son's bed-curtain, and wakened him. With a countenance on which serenity was now perfectly restored, and with a calm, even a cheerful voice, he bade him get up, for that the horses would be ready immediately, and that they must needs make some haste, in order to catch the proper hour for crossing the Sands. The boy, who had been roused from the depth of a dark and unhappy dream, saw with a gleam of joy the tender morning light, and the eyes that had never been turned upon him but in kindness. In a moment, other thoughts and real gloom chased away the first eager smile that had sprung to his lips; but he obeyed his father without delay, and in a few minutes they were both ready for their journey. Bishop, and several others of the old servants of the house, were up, despite the earliness of the hour, and hovered about them with officious hands and humble looks, until they were fairly mounted. Very little was said, and our travellers, both of them, endeavoured to keep emotion out of view; yet, when the wood was just about to receive them, and hide the Hall from their sight, each, at the same instant, turned and stayed his pace for a moment, and the eyes of the father and the son met—involuntarily, and perhaps unconsciously, revealing sympathies that had hitherto been successfully repressed.

This, however, was but the weakness of a moment. The Vicar soon struck his horse with the spur, and Reginald, nothing loath, quickened his pace to keep up with him.

It so happened that two honest Westmoreland farmers, riding in the same direction, ere long overtook and saluted them; and perhaps, in spite of the many things they had to say to each other, neither was sorry that the presence of strangers in so far divided them for a time. The Vicar entered into easy conversation with these horsemen, while Reginald, after a few minutes, scarcely conscious of their being

near him, rode silent by their side, buried in his own meditations.

These travellers reached the Sands along with them, and they all performed the dreary passage in safety. They made a mid-day meal together at the little inn of Ulverstone, and then parted, the farmers proceeding by the coast-road towards Whitehaven, while the Vicar and Reginald began to ascend the hill, beyond which, deeply secluded, lie the Valley and the Lake of Lannwell.

It was a cloudy day, and nothing could be more wild and savage than the mountain scenery through which their path led them, darkened as it was by the scowling heaven. There was no wind to agitate and disperse the clouds, and they gathered every instant into deeper gloominess. At last, just as they were about to reach the highest point of the mountain, the heavy stillness of the air was shaken—thunder growled around them among the black cliffs, and rain fell in such torrents, that they were fain to seek the shelter of a rude shepherd's cot, at this season of the year uninhabited, where they stayed for a couple of hours. They came out cold and wet when the rain was over, and man and horse were alike eager to hasten the rest of the journey. They advanced rapidly, therefore—so rapidly, that conversation could not be carried on to much advantage. The oppression of the atmosphere had passed away, and Reginald felt the stirring influence of a lively breeze, while the sun, emerging from among the dark clouds, seemed to re-assert himself in splendour, like a restored monarch.

Suddenly they were upon the brink of the descent—the hills opened before them, and far down, gleaming in quiet beauty, lay the silver Mere, amidst all its garniture of woods. The verdure of the valley had been heightened by the rain—every humid hedge-row was exhaling perfume upon the air—the sun, wheeling westward, shone every moment more triumphantly than the last; and the long-looked-for spire of Lannwell was at length distinguished over the groves of Thorwold. The Vicar's countenance lighted up when he discovered it, and he said, pointing eagerly with his finger, "Do you see it, Reginald? My dear boy, I shall soon welcome you once more to our home—our true home."

The boy would fain have been happy, and he smiled as if he had been so. He loved the scene as deeply as ever scene was loved—the wide woods through which his young footsteps had strayed—the breezy upland—the sheltered valley—they were all dear to him. His heart acknowledged its first home. The Vicar saw the smile, but he read not the dark thoughts over which the surface glittered. The youth spake not—he said to himself, "Ay, poor boy, he but feels the more;" and rode by his side slowly, surveying him and the beautiful landscape with alternate glances, but with the same air of placid satisfaction.

As they passed through the domain of Thorwold, "Mr. and Mrs. Chisney," said the Vicar, "are not here at present. Perhaps you will regret this, Reginald, and yet I feel as if for some little time we should be better quite by ourselves. We shall have so much to say and to do. We must read together, my dear Reginald, every day. I shall have so much pleasure in reading with you now, and observing the improvement you have made. If you know more than myself of some things, it will be such a delight for me to take a lesson from you now and then, in return for those I used to give you! And the garden—I promise you, you will find something for you to busy yourself with there; for, to say truth, I have not had the heart to work so much among the flowers this season, when I could not have you to assist me; but now all will go right—we shall have our plots as trim as ever in a week or two, and then you will have the more leisure for shooting when the autumn comes. Yes, Reginald, we are to be but a few months together, and we must enjoy them. I assure you I mean to go a-fishing with you. I have been forced to catch trouts for myself this summer; and now that I have taken to my basket again, I shall not quit it because you are come home. We shall be so happy, my dear boy—I shall have such a pleasure in hearing all your Oxford stories—but we shall keep them, I think, until the long evenings come on—at least some of them. Yes, Reginald, it is true we have but three months; but that is a long time, if we make good use of it.—But here we are, my boy! I see they have already discovered us; for there's old Susan staring from the door. I wonder whether they will know you, you are grown so much taller? I dare say you might almost escape some of your old friends, were it not that your company will tell the secret."

I shall not attempt to describe with what feelings Reginald heard all this. His father stopped only when they were at the door of the vicarage, and the old domestic who had been waiting for them, received him almost as if he had been a son. All the house was a-stir—every face gleamed with delight—every one hastened to offer or perform some little service; and Mr. Dalton felt a pleasure which parents know, in seeing himself neglected for the sake of another.

The Vicar found letters on his table, and he retired with them to his chamber, desiring Susan to serve tea in a little while in the library. Reginald went into his own room, changed his dress, and returned into that favourite apartment, but still his father was not there.

The boy sat down for a moment at the open window, and gazed forth idly upon the mere. Suddenly his resolution was taken. He seated himself at his father's desk, and wrote a billet of not more than half-a-dozen lines, in which

he told abruptly, and without circumlocution, his errors—his fears—his shame—his incapacity to bear the weight of that kindness against which he had dared to sin.

Having sealed and addressed the note, he placed it on the table close by the elbow-chair on which his father was accustomed to sit. He then walked hastily down-stairs, and away out from the house.

Reginald had formed no resolution of going in any particular direction. The garden was the nearest place, and the shadiest; and ere he had recovered from the first fever and palpitation of his feelings, he found himself at its further extremity, beneath the shadow of a very large and ancient thorn, with branches dipping earthwards at a great distance from its trunk. Perhaps the very oldest impressions subsisting on the tablet of his memory were connected with that very tree. It was below it that his first little mimic erections of turf and moss were raised. It was underneath its green umbrageous canopy that, when a child, he used to sit among some little boys and girls of the village, singing, while the lake below was crimsoned with sunset, the long-forgotten rhymes and simple tunes of infancy. He sat down with a burning cheek upon the large stone that rested by the trunk. He gazed now on the garden, the flower-beds glowing in the pride of July—the broad walks of green turf—the dial-stone in the midst—all the familiar bowers—and then out upon the unruffled lake, which the last lights of the west were staining with gold and purple, while, overhead, the clouds which the fervour of day had dispersed, were gathering themselves together in widening, deepening, and descending masses.

He sat there motionless, brooding and gazing, until the last gleam of reflected radiance had vanished from the surface of the water, and all above and below was veiled in one settled gloom. The air was perfectly still—the lake an inky mirror. More and more frequently his eye turned towards the vicarage; yet time passed on, and he neither heard himself called for, nor saw anything like search or motion about the house.

It was now all but night. Reginald, chilled with preserving the same posture so long in the open air, after a long day's ride, and wearied of expectation, had folded his arms upon his breast, and sunk into utter feebleness of spirit. Suddenly he saw a dark figure moving slowly along the great turf-walk in the middle of the garden. He leaned back, and shrunk more and more into himself—he knew it was his father. He came close to where he was sitting. He saw that he had no suspicion of being observed—he heard him whispering to himself—he saw him advance to the wall which overlooked the lake—he heard a groan from the heart which HE had wounded—he leapt up—the sound reached the Vicar's ear.—"Reginald," he said, "Is it you, Reginald?—Come hither, and speak to me."

He obeyed. When he had come within a few paces, the Vicar said, in a low voice, "Reginald, you have not mentioned the amount of the sum—do so."

The young man, with the abruptness of agony, named a sum, for which, despite his note, the good Vicar had been quite unprepared. He heard him, however, in silence. A long pause ensued. The Vicar turned round, and walked again towards the lake—he returned—he advanced to Reginald.—"My son," he said, "this will make us all poor indeed."

The boy strove to speak, but the second word stuck in his throat. "Nay," resumed the father, "I do not expect anything more from you at present. I see that you suffer—I know that you have been suffering. I trust your repentance will be lasting, as it is now severe. That which is done, cannot be undone."

Reginald squeezed his arms together on his bosom. "I abhor, I loathe myself," he cried. "Father, I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

"My poor boy," said the Vicar, advancing and laying his hand upon his shoulder—"my poor boy, I have nothing in the world but yourself. You have erred—you have erred sadly, and we must both suffer for what you have done. But this suffering is only in the purse, and if it were not for your own sake, I should scorn it. Know, that if I should be taken suddenly from you, this unhappy fault would leave you all but penniless in the world. Know, that you have undone, in a few months, all that the exertion of twenty years had been able to do. I say this, because it is fitting that you should at once be aware of the extent of what has been done. I deepen the wound now, that it may heal the more gently."

The Vicar kissed his son's cheek, and drew his arm under his own. "Reginald, my dear boy, you are cold—your hand is cold as ice—you have been sitting here too long in the dark. Come away into the house with me—you need not fear, surely, to face me by the light of our own fire-side?"

Reginald sobbed as he walked along the path with him. "Calm yourself," he said; "I have arranged everything in my own mind. Patience and future prudence will enable us to get the better of it all. God be thanked, that yours has been the confession of folly rather, all things considered, than of vice. In trusting you too much, I was trusting myself too much; yes, I also confess that I have done wrong."

"It is now," said Reginald, "that you wound me indeed. I pray you, do not speak thus."

His father pressed the boy's arm against his heart, and answered, halting his pace, "Reginald, for the present, let no more be

said between us upon this matter. I shall pay your debts immediately. I bless God that I *can* do so. If ever you repeat such folly, know that I cannot go farther. It is I, not you, that am liable—you will ruin your father."

"I swear," said Reginald——

"No, no," said the Vicar, "I will not hear you."

"I swear," proceeded the boy—"I call Heaven to witness, that henceforth I shall never yield. I will be strong in the strength of grief and shame."

"It is well," said the Vicar; "you are still my boy, my dear boy, my only hope, my own Reginald. Your home-coming has been a bitter one. Alas! my dear, I little knew what made you so cheerless as we came down the hill into our own valley again. But home must still be home to me and to you—you must not hate your home, Reginald—our meeting must not be all darkness."

"Your kindness oppresses my heart."

"Nay, nay, my boy, there must be no *talk* of kindness between *us*. Come away, my dear, the night is advancing. Go to your room and wash your face, for I know you need it, and then come into the Library, although perhaps I should not call it——"

He ended abruptly—they were close to the house, and entered it together. The moment they were within the threshold, the Vicar called to his servants in a cheerful tone of voice, and bade them serve up supper without delay.

The lights were trimmed, the table-cloth spread, ere Reginald came into the parlour from his bed-room. The grey-haired female servant who was arranging the table, had been in the house ever since he was a child, and now she was using her privilege, and talking gaily and kindly to the Vicar of his son; while he, on his part, listened with a placid smile to her discourse. This the boy's entrance interrupted; but when he looked to the old woman and to his father, the calm of kindness met him from the faces of them both. He, in his turn, smiled, but the deep dejection which that smile might conceal from the aged domestic, was visible enough to the Vicar.

"There's ne'er a drop of wine up-stairs," said old Susan Hullock; "and I'm sure you will both need a drop of sommat after such a ride."

The Vicar paused for a moment, and then said, "'Tis very true that you say, Susan, and I hope you will take a good cup to Reginald's health to-night, ere you go to bed yourself.—Reginald, my dear," he proceeded, "take my keys, and go down to the cellar for me, for you must not expect to escape from any of your old offices. Susan will take a light, and show you what to fetch."

Trifles make up the genuine language of kindness—and this little mark of confidence was enough to go to Reginald's heart.—He felt once more the pride of filling a son's part in a father's house—but with that pride, ever humble, what deep humility was now mingled! He felt as if to be a servant in that house, to perform the most menial offices about that good man, would have been enough, and more than enough, to satisfy his heart. But he saw that his father wished him to suppress his emotions, and he endeavoured to give him at least the obedience of concealment. The Vicar himself talked even gaily while they were supping, and encouraged old Susan, who seemed unwilling to leave the room, even when she had done all she had to do, to put in her little word as often as she had a mind.

Mr. Dalton, however, perceived that Reginald could not compose himself for conversation; so, after the table-cloth had been removed, he said, filling both glasses, "Here's good night to you, my boy; 'tis no wonder you are weary, and in truth, I think my own bones are rather sore, after jolting over that high hill in the storm. The night is calm—I hope we shall have a fine day to-morrow to walk about, and see all our old friends." So saying, the Vicar nodded affectionately once more, drank off his wine, and rung for his bed-room candle.

Reginald, when he found himself alone in his old chamber, sat down, and mused for a long while over all that had happened since his departure, and since his return. Certainly his bosom had shaken off a terrible load—certainly he felt relieved—yet the pain he had gone through was too recent to admit of his feeling the relief fully. And then when he reflected a little more, a new pain began to mingle in his thoughts. He had told his extravagance and its consequences, and that fault had been forgiven but too freely—but he had said nothing of his love—how shameful was it to have concealed anything at such a moment, and from such a father—how doubly shameful to have concealed this, which he had at least *allowed* Mr. Keith to suppose he was to reveal immediately. The more he thought of it, however, the more deeply he felt reluctance—"My father has stretched his kindness," he said, "to the utmost point—I have given him pain—I have tortured him. Why should I add to this, by telling what there is no immediate necessity for revealing? —Years must elapse ere I can hope to make Ellen Hesketh my wife—never shall I do so, until I have made myself an independent man —and *then*, what reason can I have for dreaming that my father will disapprove of my choice?—can I doubt that he will rejoice in it?—can I doubt that he will partake in my virtuous pride and my virtuous happiness as a man, who has sympathised so largely with my erring feelings as a boy? No—his joy *then* will be but the greater, because I say nothing of the matter to him *now*. To another person in his situation, her religion indeed might be an obstacle—but not so with

him—my own mother was a Catholic as well as my Ellen. In all else there is everything to praise, and nothing to condemn. Whether we ever discover her family or not, she is a lady, with the education, and the feelings, and the manners of a lady. My father will love Ellen—she will be a daughter to him in his old age."

In this way Reginald contrived to soothe and flatter himself into something like self-complacence, as to his behaviour in regard to that delicate matter. Having done so, his imagination began, as if weary of long inaction, to exercise itself in all the luxuries of reverie. "When I go back to College," thus he dreamed, "I shall be exactly in all things the reverse of what they have hitherto known me there—I shall live altogether alone—I shall read without intermission—I shall visit nobody but Mr. Keith and Ellen—I shall take my degree with the highest honours—I shall take orders immediately—I shall get a curacy to begin with—if possible, quite near to my father—Perhaps I may succeed in getting one so near this that I may live under the same roof with him—With him and Ellen together I should be too happy!—What joy will it be for me to lead her through our woods—among them she will not regret the forests of Fulda—her heart will be at home beside our silver lake."

He had undergone so many different species of excitement, that it was no wonder the stirred mind baffled the wearied body for a long while. In a word, the grey light of the morning found him still lying broad awake upon his pillow. He sprung up when he first observed this—which, to say truth, was not until long after he might have done so—opened the window, and cooled his burning brow in the breezes of the dawn.

Reginald then slept, and slept so soundly, that his father made several attempts, ere he succeeded in wakening him for breakfast. When the boy met the Vicar's eye, he shrunk from it; for in his latter dreams his misery had been present with him in all the depth of its unrevealed state, and for the first moment he could scarcely command himself sufficiently to call up the events of the preceding evening. When his father wakened him the morning before at Grypherwast, trouble succeeded joy—but now a deep, though indeed a troubled, sense of joy shot at once through all his heart.

His father left him, and he dressed himself quickly; yet, in doing so, he had had time enough to become very serious; and when he entered the parlour, the Vicar took notice of that in silence, while old Susan took notice, not in silence, of the paleness of his complexion. "But 'tis all the consequences of that Oxford," said the old body—"you would have had the same bloom as ever, if you had just stayed at Lannwell."

Both the Vicar's look and that of Reginald confessed the unconscious truth of Susan's remark.

CHAPTER XXX.

CONFUSING ALLUSIONS.

THE month of August was half over ere the Squire of Thorwold and his fair lady returned from London to the north, and Frederick Chisney had lingered so long among the different young friends whom he had promised to visit at their paternal residences in different parts of the country, that he made not his appearance until the eve of the first of September. He arrived in all that flow of spirits which youthful sportsmen generally bring with them to the opening of the shooting season. His cheek had caught a burning glow from the journey which had just been completed, and his eye danced in his head with the glee of expectation.

His brother and Mrs. Chisney had scarcely bid the gay youth a gay welcome, ere he said, "Will you forgive me, James; or, rather, will my sister forgive me—do you know I have invited a party of travellers to dine with you to-day?"

"Pooh! pooh!" said the Squire; "you're not going to make apologies here, Frederick."

"Any friends of yours, surely," said the lady, "will be welcome to us. But who are they?"

"Why," said Frederick, "I must own they're rather a queer set—but perhaps so much the better, they'll at least pay your good cheer with a laugh. I went round by Kendal," he proceeded, "for I abominate those eternal Sands, and, besides, I wanted to be a night at Polgarth; and as I was riding up the side of Windermere, I overtook my friends, who, you must know, have been making a circuit of the Lake."

"But who are they, Frederick—gentlemen or ladies?"

"Both, both—two gentlemen and a lady—a Mr. Macdonald from Edinburgh, his wife and his son—that's the party. You stare.—The fact is, I never saw any of them but the father before. He travelled all the way to Oxford with Reginald Dalton and me last October. He came from Sir Charles Catline's, so that I suppose he is, so far, *comme il faut;* but, at all events, he's an amusing old fellow—a real Scot every inch of him; and both Reginald and I got so intimate with him during our journey, that when I found he was coming to look at your mere here, I really could not do less than say you would be happy to see them at the Hall."

"You did quite right," said the Squire.

"Will they stay all night, think ye?" said the lady.

"No, no," said Frederick, "that would rather be too much of a good thing—let them e'en sleep at the inn. But, by the way, had

we not better send for Reginald, for he knows as much of old Macdonald as myself? Indeed, I think they took to each other even more heartily."

"We may send," said the Squire, gravely; "but, to tell ye the truth, Frederick, I doubt if Reginald will come. Why, what have ye done with the boy at Oxford? I declare, I never saw such a change on any creature since I was born."

"Nor I, indeed," said Mrs. Chisney; "the poor young man seems quite broken-hearted. —What has happened to him, Frederick?"

"I know of nothing that has happened to him much out of the common course of things," answered Frederick. "'Tis a fanciful fellow, though; there's no saying what he may have taken into his head."

"Ah! Frederick," quoth the Squire, "I see you could speak if you had a mind; but no matter, you think 'tis not right to tell tales out of school, I suppose?"

"Upon my word, brother, I have no tales worth the telling. I take it he's confoundedly glum, and no wonder, because all the country says Miss Dalton will leave Grypherwast to Sir Charles."

"The more's the shame to her if she does," cried the Squire; "but that's not all, you may rely on it, for the Vicar seems almost as melancholy as his son; and he at least, I have the best reason to know, never expected anything from that quarter. In fact, he told me so himself, more than a year ago."

"Well, I suppose the case may be, that Reginald has been playing rather too free with the Vicar's purse. I confess I thought, for one, that his prospects were so fair as to the Grypherwast succession, it was no great matter if he spent a few hundreds, more or less."

"Ah! Frederick, you're a thoughtless fellow. I fear you've had a hand in leading the poor young man into unsuitable expenses; and now both he and his worthy father are suffering very severely for it."

"God bless me, James! I was a couple of days at the Hall, along with him and the Vicar; and, on my soul, the old Squire and his sister treated them in such a style, that I never doubted they were as sure of Grypherwast as you are of Thorwold."

"Well, well, Frederick, there's no mending what's past, you know; but I trust you will be very wary as to what's to come. In fact, I asked them to dinner but the other day, and they would not come, although I learned afterwards that they were quite alone at the vicarage."

"Nay, d—n me, this will never do. We must brush them up again. I don't believe he can owe more than £800 or £1000, after all."

"£800, or £1000! Why, you shock me, indeed, Frederick. Why, the poor man's living is not much above £300 a-year."

"I'm sorry for it,' said Frederick. "I suppose he had better not send Reginald back to College again. Better for him to stay and read here, and get a Carlisle ordination, after all, than go back to Oxford, and reduce his style so sadly as this state of affairs would require."

"Frederick," said the Squire, very seriously, "I am exceedingly sorry to hear you speak so lightly of this matter. He's a very fine young man, and I assure you, it will give me great pain if his course of life is to be permanently affected in this way. O, Frederick! it is all your fault. He had no notion of expense—he could have had none when he left Lannwell."

"Not he, i'faith; nor I don't think he had the least notion of money. But, by Jupiter, you must not throw the blame on me; he's a spirited fellow, and got quite mad with wine, and fox-hunting, and cards, and tennis, and billiards, and I know not what. He fell in love, too; perhaps 'tis that, after all, that makes him hang his head."

"Love!—ridiculous!"—said the Squire. "A boy at his age has nothing to do with love."

"Love!—'tis impossible!" said Mrs. Chisney. "What could he get to fall in love with at Oxford?"

"God knows, some little half-German outlandish piece of goods—a pretty thing though, a very pretty little girl. She is niece, or cousin, or something of that sort, to an old Catholic priest there. By the way, I believe it was this very man Macdonald that brought them first together."

"Well, well," quoth the Squire, "we'll send down and invite them, however. Reginald will perhaps come when he knows you are here."

"Yes, yes; and, do you hear, James, give him a good touch of your Champagne, and I'll be bound he'll clear up his brows. I dare say 'tis just that dull, quiet vicarage, that has played the devil with him. It must be a cursed change, to be sure, from old Oxford."

"Nay," said the lady, "I don't think Reginald is out of spirits on that score—I never saw two creatures so fond of each other, as he and his father are—they go a-fishing together almost every day—they are quite like two young companions."

"'Tis delightful to see how they hang on each other," says the Squire—"but indeed there can't be a kinder, better man than the Vicar, and Reginald has very sweet dispositions, or I am much mistaken in him."

"By my faith," quoth Frederick, "you need not go to praise him to his face in this way, at any rate—I assure you he has conceit enough about him already. —The Oxford ladies thought him so handsome, forsooth, and he had the character of great cleverness,

too, in his college, although, God knows, he did not fag much neither."

"Nay, nay," said the Squire, "you must not take to quizzing your friend just now.—At what time may we look for your Scotch importation?"

"Sharp at the hour, you may swear.—I told them when you dine.—Unless, indeed, Mrs. Macdonald should fall in love with a poet, or a waterfall, or a petrified piece of fir, or something or other by the way."

"Ah! a blue-stocking?" quoth the Squire.

"Blue as the Empyrean! Poetry, Botany, Mineralogy, Metaphysics! a tin-canister full of dry leaves—a bag rattling with shells and crystals—'Dugald Stewart' in the chaise-pocket—and 'Wordsworth, the Laker,' in her reticule!"

"O Lord!" said Mrs. Chisney, "what shall I get to say to such a learned lady?"

"Leave her to me," cried Frederick. "I'll undertake to amuse her; and, if you will give me my own way, to amuse you all."

"Have a care," said the Squire—"remember, at all events, they're our guests."

"Never fear, never fear—but be sure you have a pretty lot of books tumbled about the drawing-room—bring down 'Locke,' and 'Hartley,' and Denon's 'Egypt,' and Thomson's 'Seasons,' and the 'Edinburgh Review,' if you still take it in, and you shall see what you shall see."

The notion which Mr. and Mrs. Chisney had taken up about Reginald's state of spirits, was, in reality, by no means an erroneous one. Although his first feelings had been those of relief, yet, when he had had time to reflect more at leisure upon all that had happened, the weight had sunk down again upon his bosom. In spite of the silence which the kind Vicar maintained, in regard to the disagreeable subject of their first conversation, and in spite of all the efforts which the good man made to appear as happy as usual, Reginald's filial eyes could not be mistaken; he saw clearly that the Vicar was struggling with melancholy thoughts; and his conscience told him, that he, he only, was the cause. But then what could the young man do? Was it for him to lead the conversation to the painful theme, and thereby, perhaps, aggravate his father's pain, but certainly not diminish it?

Delicacy on both sides prevented, in a word, free communication of feelings as to this matter—but perhaps the same delicacy enabled each to divine all that the other could have said, had he spoken. At all events, there was nothing, not the least touch, of coldness or distrust. They spent their days together—they wandered together over the woods and hills—they lingered out the burning noons together beside the brooks; and at evening they read together, as the Vicar had fondly proposed at their first meeting. And it was then, perhaps, that they both approached the nearest to happiness; for the thoughts of others were able to draw them from their own; and besides, the Vicar could not read along with his son, without perceiving that, of whatever follies he had been guilty, his mind, his whole intellect, had made a rapid stride during the period of his absence. It was not merely that he knew more Greek and Latin than he did before (although this was true also), but that his mind had been forced upon itself, and that he followed no longer like a boy, but understood like a man. The experiences of life, the joys of revelry, the trouble of contrition, the bitters, above all, and the sweets of love—these were not things that had passed over him without leaving their traces. They had ploughed up the smooth surface, and revealed poverty indeed, of which he was, but riches also, of which he was not, conscious.—His spirit had leaped over that gulf, which some never pass at all, and which so many pass with slow and cautious difficulty.—He had a present, from which he could borrow light to look upon the past. Poetry was no longer a web of dreams, nor history a roll of names;—wherever strength was visible, he strove to read its workings; he sought for motives beneath the glaring surface of action—and every page, on which vivid intellect had stamped its image, no matter what the style or the theme, transferred, with the rapidity and the brightness of lightning, a new energy, impulse, and stimulus to his understanding.

Upon the whole, there can be no doubt that he was soothed and comforted by being with his father. He was in aspect, indeed, dejected—and there was heaviness at the heart, to which that was the index—but there was nothing now, or comparatively very little, of that hot, and feverish, and passionate pain, which had accompanied him from Oxford to his paternal fire-side. The very calmness of the scene—the regularity of hours and occupations—the total abstinence from wine, noisy company, and strong excitations of any other than an intellectual kind—and, above all, the soft, and amiable, and consciously pure and good feelings, which everything in his intercourse with the Vicar tended to promote and nourish—all these things operated quietly and gently upon his heart, and the sadness which they could not expel, they at least robbed of its keenest bitterness.

He had had the satisfaction, moreover, of receiving a very long, and kind, and paternal letter from old Mr. Keith, in which the worthy Priest informed him, that his health had been quite beyond his hopes re-established. But this, much as it rejoiced him, was not all that was pleasing to him in the Priest's letter. Mr. Keith told him distinctly, that, at the time when he came to Godstow, he feared he himself had been guilty of almost as culpable rashness as either of the young people—that he now looked back with great regret to the

easiness with which, in a very weak state of body, and perhaps of mind, he had sanctioned (or at least done what might be so interpreted) an engagement of so much solemnity between two persons so young and so inexperienced. "I ask nothing of you now," said he, "but silence. If you have not mentioned this business to your father, do not say a word of it. Banish it, at least do what you can to banish it, from your own thoughts. It shall be my business to divert as far as I can, the mind of my ward from dwelling upon the remembrance of what has been. Should you both find hereafter that your feelings have undergone no change, you shall have my blessing on your union; but, looking at the whole affair as I now can do —looking both to her interests, and, what are scarcely less dear to me, to yours, I cannot but see that there would be folly, and worse than folly, in my giving my sanction to any correspondence by letter between you, under present circumstances."

Reginald felt, indeed, what every young lover feels, that it was a sad thing for him to be forbidden the privilege of writing and receiving letters from his fair one; but the Priest's injunction of silence towards his father, was to him, who really had not had courage to speak, and yet had felt as if silence were guilt, instant and effectual relief from an intolerable pain. "It is but for a very few weeks more," said he to himself, "and I shall see Ellen again—I feel that we shall meet unchanged." If this last feeling was sometimes crossed by a passing shade of doubt, it still kept its place.

As it happened, the Vicar and he were in the library together when Mr. Chisney's invitation arrived. They had just been reading something that had exceedingly delighted the Vicar. "Well, Reginald," said he, "I think we may as well dine with the Squire to-day —read his note."

Had the Vicar been able to read Reginald's face (which he could not do, for the youth had his back towards the window), he must have seen enough to excite his attention. Reginald started, and his cheek crimsoned, when he saw the name of Macdonald—the name of that individual with whom the fate of Ellen Hesketh seemed, in some mysterious fashion, to have been so closely and so inextricably connected. All this, however, was lost upon the Vicar; he heard only the young man's hurried whisper of assent, and by the time he had penned his answer to the Squire, he was alone in the apartment.

To say truth, Reginald, the moment after he had left the Vicar's room, was half inclined to repent him of the consent which he had given. He could not help blaming Frederick Chisney very much for all the unhappy consequences which his residence at Oxford had entailed upon him. There was no one thing that he could lay his finger on, and say, *here* Chisney did the evil—but he felt, and, in regard to some things, feeling is not the worst guide, that but for that gay and sportive, and, at the same time, strong and sarcastic spirit, his career might have, in all probability, been blameless, and his heart at this moment light. He therefore dreaded, in some sort, the being thrown again into his society. As for Macdonald, a minute's reflection told him, that he had not only no reason, but no right, to expect anything either good or bad from meeting with him—and yet, in spite of all this, a certain vague indescribable feeling haunted him, that some day or other he might have more to do with this man; and that, therefore, he might do well to keep up his acquaintance with him, such as it was.

The Scotch party were already at Thorwold, ere the Vicar and his son arrived there; and there were, as it happened, several strangers besides. The Daltons had not been prepared for Macdonald's family, nor for anything like the bustle of company—but perhaps, after all, Reginald was not sorry that his meeting, either with Macdonald or with Frederick Chisney, should be other than a private one. The Scot, when he entered the room, advanced to him, and said, in his highest note, shaking his hand, as if he would have pulled it out of the socket, "As I'm a Christian soul, I would have passed him in the street—why, he's grown sax inches in less than the twelvemonth. — Od! he's taller than our Thomas, I believe.—How are you, Mr. Dalton? but I need not ask that—it's weel seen on you that there's rowth of good cheer among yon Principals and Doctors — Od! man, do ye mind yon waiter? ha, ha, ha!"

The Vicar was standing close beside Reginald, so that he could not but introduce Mr. Macdonald—who, in his turn, led them both to the sofa where Mrs. Chisney was sitting, and introduced them to a lady, whom, unless he had said the word, Reginald would certainly not have suspected of being his wife. There might perhaps be something of the *precieuse* in her air; but, on the whole, and more especially at the first glance, Mrs. Macdonald was not only a very handsome, but a ladylike person. Young she could not be—her son, a full-grown man, exceedingly like her in feature and complexion, stood by her elbow—but her eye had lost neither the fire nor the richness of youth; and her hair, where the curls peeped from beneath her mob-cap, showed all the dark and firm glossiness of five-and-twenty. She disdained not to smile very sweetly when our youth was presented to her; nor did her smile disdain to display a set of teeth, such as (if French critics may be in aught believed) but few Englishwomen are fortunate enough to exhibit at any period of life.

This lady was seated at the dinner-table between Reginald and Frederick, while right opposite were the Vicar and Mr. Macdonald.

More than once our youth felt disposed to bestow an execration upon this arrangement —but the reader shall judge.

MACDONALD. Mr. Reginald Dalton, I say, will you do me the pleasure to take a glass of sherry with me?—Here's to you, my young friend—and how did you leave all at Oxford? Did you ever foregather with the auld Priest any more?

REGINALD (*colouring*). I saw Mr. Keith just before I left the University, sir. He was in a very bad state of health, I am sorry to say.

MACDONALD. So I hear—so I hear—Poor man, he's seen his best, that must be allowed. —What is't ails him?

REGINALD. I feared a general breaking up —but I understand he is rather better again.

MACDONALD. I'm glad of that — I'm heartily glad of that, sir.—(*Turning to the* VICAR.) 'Tis an old acquaintance of mine, sir; a Catholic clergyman, now resident at Oxford. I had the pleasure of introducing your son to him last harvest.

MRS. MACDONALD (*to* REGINALD). Pray, Mr. Dalton, did you ever meet with a young lady that lives with Mr. Keith—his niece—Miss Hesketh? Mr. Macdonald did not see her, somehow, when he was at Oxford.

MACDONALD. And how could I see her, Mrs. Macdonald? It was ten o'clock ere I got to the town, and I was to be off for London again before breakfast. I'm sure I told you Mr. Keith said she was very well.

REGINALD (*to* MRS. MACDONALD). I have seen Miss Hesketh, ma'am—I believe she is very well.

FREDERICK CHISNEY. I believe she is—a very pretty girl indeed, Mrs. Macdonald.—Isn't she so, Dalton?

REGINALD. Yes—certainly—very much so.

MRS. MACDONALD. If she's like her mother, I'm sure——

MR. MACDONALD (*to the* VICAR—*speaking very loud*). It's a very fine town, Oxford—nobody can deny that—I have seldom seen a prettier little town—but, dear me! what a Babel of Colleges and Churches! What is the use of them a', Mr. Dalton? A terrible waste of money yonder, sir.

THE VICAR. Why, young men will be young men, Mr. Macdonald.

MACDONALD. My troth will they—but it was not that I was thinking of—I was speaking of the great expenditure of public property, sir. There's no man will tell me that things are as they should be in yon quarter.

THE VICAR. Why, Mr. Macdonald, I believe these colleges have just as good a right to their lands as any private gentleman has to his—generally a more ancient one indeed.

MACDONALD. Pooh, pooh! everything that serves for public purposes is public property, and ought to be under the control of the public.—I will venture to say, that there's more young men educated at Edinburgh, than at either Oxford or Cambridge; and with us, I suppose a thousand a-year or so is all it costs anybody, but the individual students their fees, and so forth. But, to be sure, everything goes on in a quieter way with us. Our professors, sir, must starve, if they be idle, and our lads must behave themselves. Oh, what a night was that I passed at Oxford!

THE VICAR. What happened, sir?

MACDONALD. What happened, sir?—Why, it is not in the power of any Christian man to tell ye what happened—Such a hubbleshow, such a racketing, such fighting, such knocking down, such a rushing and riving. Why, they were worse than any meal-mob—and some auld heads among the very thick o't too.

FREDERICK CHISNEY. Not yours, I hope, Mr. Macdonald?

MACDONALD. No, my faith, I keepit a good loup of twa stories of stone and lime between me and them; but I dare say you were ane of them yourself, Mr. Chisney—you're no better than your neighbours, I'se warrant.—I'm sure *you* would get little sleep any more than me, Mr. Reginald.

THE SQUIRE. Come, come, we'll have no tales out of school, Mr. Macdonald.—I am sure you enjoyed the ride through Little Furness, ma'am.

MRS. MACDONALD. Delightful indeed, sir —such charming woods—such picturesque old oaks—and such lakes—such heavenly lakes!—but Mr. Macdonald would scarcely give us time to look at that grand Abbey. Was it not very hard, Mr. Chisney?

MACDONALD. Well, my dear, and if you had had your will of the Abbey, you must have wanted Mr. Chisney's good dinner, you'll allow.—Ha! ha!—I think I have her there, Mr. Chisney.

MRS. MACDONALD. O, Mr. Macdonald, you make me blush for you, indeed.

MACDONALD. Blush away, my love; and, I think, Mr. Reginald Dalton is blushing too. I suppose you're a lover of scenery, too, wi' your tale.

REGINALD. I must plead guilty, Mr. Macdonald.

FREDERICK CHISNEY. We have some fine ruins near Oxford. I think you were fond of Godstow, Reginald. You went up the river, they told me, the very day ere you set off.

MRS. MACDONALD. Godstow! how I should like to see Godstow! Do they show the very spot where fair Rosamond lies, Mr. Dalton?

REGINALD. Indeed, I don't know, ma'am, but 'tis supposed to be somewhere within the chapel.

FREDERICK. Pooh! You know Conybeare found out the very place. I was present myself when they dug it open; and, for that matter, I abstracted a tooth or two, which are

heartily at Mrs. Macdonald's service, if she will do me the honour.

MRS. MACDONALD. Oh, what sacrilege! You shock me, Mr. Chisney. Well, how barbarous men are! I protest, none of you have any feeling.—Is Godstow really a pretty ruin, though, Mr. Reginald?

REGINALD. O, very pretty indeed—a very pretty ruin. Every one allows the situation of the nunnery is charming.

MRS. MACDONALD. By the way, Mr. Reginald, talking of nunneries, is it true that Miss Hesketh took the veil, ere she left Germany? It was said so at one time.

MACDONALD. My dear, what folly you speak of. How should Mr. Dalton know anything about Miss Hesketh and her veil? I dare say he never saw her three times in his life.

FREDERICK. Not he, indeed.—Did you, Reginald?

MRS. MACDONALD. And she's really very handsome, Mr. Dalton? Dark or fair? Her mother was very dark.

MACDONALD. My dear Mrs. Macdonald, I'm sure you must see well enough that Mr. Dalton has never paid any very particular attention to the young lady's complexion. Don't you know that the young gentlemen at Oxford live like so many monks in their colleges?

FREDERICK. Yes, like monks exactly. We wear long black gowns, ma'am, and attend matins and vespers, and say a Latin grace before dinner, and are shut up every night at nine o'clock, under lock and key; and there's never a petticoat allowed to be seen among our quadrangles. We are a most monastic fraternity, you may depend upon it.

MRS. MACDONALD. Interesting relics of antiquity! Rather Gothic, however, Mr. Chisney.

MACDONALD. Interesting fiddlesticks!—Why, they're the most outrageous set of drinking, roaring, rioting young scapegraces under the sun. It's no the cowl makes the monk, my dear.

MRS. CHISNEY. You have another delightful journey before you, Mrs. Macdonald. They say—for indeed I am ashamed to confess I have never been there myself—that the views about Coniston Mere are some of the finest in the whole of the lake country.

MRS. MACDONALD. Coniston! I don't remember the name in 'Wordsworth.'

MR. CHISNEY. Why, I don't think Coniston is worth going so far out of your way for, unless, indeed, you were to cross the Sands at Ulverstone, and so to Lancaster.

MACDONALD. Well, that's just the route I was purposing. When we're at Lancaster, we're not far from Little Pyesworth;—and, if I understood Sir Charles right, this Grypherwast is not very far from that.

MR. CHISNEY. Grypherwast!—You are going to Grypherwast Hall, Mr. Macdonald? You will see some friends of Mr. Dalton's, then.

MACDONALD (*to the* VICAR). O, you're the same Daltons, are you, Mr. Dalton?

THE VICAR. The same family, Mr. Macdonald.

MR. CHISNEY. Mr. Dalton is the nearest branch of the family, Mr. Macdonald.

MACDONALD. I crave your pardon; but really I'm not acquainted with any of the Grypherwast family, properly speaking. 'Tis Sir Charles Catline I'm going to pay a little visit to—he and I are old friends—of twenty years standing, I believe.

MR. CHISNEY. Sir Charles is now residing at Grypherwast?

MR. MACDONALD. So I took him up. I wrote, offering the visit, and the answer was dated there.

MR. CHISNEY. A very fine old seat you will see, Mr. Macdonald; 'tis really one of the best specimens we have, in this part of the world, of your real old English manor-place.

MRS. MACDONALD. Is there any painted glass, Mr. Reginald? For, of course, you are well acquainted with this place.

REGINALD. A little in the hall, ma'am; but I really never examined the whole of the house.

MACDONALD. O, my dear, you'll have abundance of time to look about for yourself. And my friend Lady Catline has a great deal of taste; she'll have a pleasure in showing you all the lions.

MRS. MACDONALD (*to her son*). Well, Tom, my dear, I'm so happy to hear 'tis a real old hall we're to see. I love the very name of an old hall.

MACDONALD. My dear Mrs. Macdonald, you think everybody is as much taken up about old halls, and old hills, and old windows, and old what-nots, as yourself? I dare say Tom will have other things to look to in a house where there are so many pretty young ladies. I assure you, one may go far ere one meets with a more charming family than the Catlines, &c. &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXXI.

REGINALD RETURNS TO OXFORD.

THE meeting with Frederick Chisney and the Macdonalds was the only incident that broke, during several weeks, the uniformity of Reginald's life. The Scotch party proceeded the next day on their journey towards Grypherwast; and Mr. Frederick and our youth met but rarely afterwards. The truth was, that Reginald had refused, even although the Vicar himself pressed it, to buy a shooting licence; and Chisney, who had never dreamt of that impediment, attributed Reginald's refusal to accompany him to the fields, to

some whim of coldness, with which he was too careless and too proud to think of contending. The consequence was, that the two young men saw little of each other, except when now and then they met at the dinner-table of Thorwold. The Hall was full of company indeed for the most part of this month—and Frederick was necessarily engaged very much with his own and his brother's friends.

It might perhaps be rather more than a fortnight from the time when the Macdonalds left Thorwold, ere the Vicar of Lannwell received a summons to go to Grypherwast, for the dispatch of some business connected with the late Mr. Dalton's executry. The summons came in the shape of a formal letter from an attorney, so that the Vicar never thought of carrying his son along with him. He was absent for several days—and when he came back, he said very little to Reginald about anything that had happened. From a few broken hints, the young man gathered that Mr. Macdonald had been mistaken in supposing, that Sir Charles Catline had taken up his residence, with all his family, at Grypherwast Hall; but that the elder Miss Catline was still there, and indeed had never left the place since the time of the Squire's death. Mrs. Elizabeth, he was led to understand, had recovered, in a great measure, her usual composure of spirits—and, in short, his impression was, that, while Sir Charles managed all his sister's affairs, the internal economy of the house itself continued to be very much what it had been during Mr. Dalton's lifetime. Of all these things, however, the Vicar spoke briefly and reservedly—still more obscurely he touched upon the fact, that he had been farther in Lancashire than Grypherwast Hall; but there was something in his look when he did mention that, which made Reginald suspect, that the business which called him to extend his journey, had been disagreeable. In a word, Reginald gathered from that, and from a more frequent receipt of letters, and other little circumstances, that the Vicar was engaged in getting together the money necessary for discharging his debts—and that this was a matter of some difficulty. The sense of this, which every succeeding day rendered stronger, afflicted the young man very heavily—and so much the more surely, by reason of the extreme delicacy marked in the Vicar's guarded reserve about everything connected with that painful subject.

One evening the Vicar said abruptly to Reginald, "My dear boy, I have been thinking a great deal about you. It occurs to me, that, upon the whole, it might be as well if you should spend this winter at home, and not return to the University until the next Michaelmas. I can write to Mr. Barton, who will do whatever is necessary in the way of business, and explain to the head of your College, that some family circumstances have induced me to think this step an advisable one."

Reginald assented at once to his father's proposal; and after he had done so, there was some cheerful, even gay, conversation between them, about what their occupations during the solitary and dark season of the year should be. It ended in the Vicar's ringing for lights, and opening his desk—"For there's no use in losing even a single post," said he; "I had much better write immediately to Mr. Barton."

Reginald left him, and walked out into the garden by himself. As he strolled up and down in the twilight among the fading bowers, he had leisure to consider more narrowly the plan to which he had just acceded—or rather the true state of his own feelings in regard to it. In truth, he had been taken quite by surprise—the idea of remaining all the winter at Lannwell had never once occurred to him—at least it had never seriously occurred to him, since the evening of his return to the vicarage. The time that had passed since then had been a time of anything but happiness—it had been a season of continual regret, painful reflection, humble repentance,—his spirit had indeed been in a softened state, upon the whole—but deep melancholy had, nevertheless, not deserted it. Yet miserable, absolutely miserable, he certainly had not been. What was the ray that, even when he was conscious of nothing but darkness, had all the while been shining upon him?—what was the one ray of hope that had never ceased to gleam?—Alas! he felt it but too surely, too deeply, too sorrowfully now. The image of Ellen—the anticipation of meeting her again, and of meeting her so soon—this was the one dream that had hovered near him—this was the hope that had sustained him. He had pictured, indeed, plans of labour and of self-denial, and he had persuaded himself that his spirit was lightened by the very anticipation of toil—but frailty had blended itself even in his loftiest resolves, and now he started to find how much that mixture had deceived him. With the day or the week of solitary exertion, he had unconsciously associated the idea of that gentle approving smile—enough, a thousand times more than enough to redeem all, to compensate all—

> "A gleam of radiance heavenly bright—
> An overpayment of delight."

And now this was gone—months, long, weary months of winter, spring, summer, autumn, must pass away ere he should see her again. And what might not happen ere then?—Mr. Keith had recovered for the present, but who could tell what might be the issue—how soon might his infirmities return—how soon, how suddenly might the infirmities of so old a man terminate—and then what would become of Ellen?—In the Priest's injunction about not writing he had acquiesced; but that was in

the belief of its applying only to a certain determinate period—a period of so many weeks—how could he now dispute its propriety?—how could he write now?—and, if he did not, why might not She be removed—hid from him—lost, lost for ever?—The more he pondered upon all these things, the more painful his perplexity became. It was now, for the first time, that it occurred to him, Ellen Hesketh might very possibly have been kept in the dark as to the cause even of the silence that had already been—Mr. Keith might have judged it his duty to practise something like deceit as to this matter. Reginald could scarcely say to himself, that if it had been so, the Priest had done wrong; but take the worst event—suppose the old man to be seized with sudden and fatal illness—what then must be the consequence? Would not Miss Hesketh be justified in thinking all that was ill of him? Could she possibly think otherwise? Would she have the least reason to take him into consideration in the arrangement of her future plans of life?—No. How could he tell whither she might go, in what retirement she might bury herself? Might she not even seek and find an opportunity of going back to Germany? Some of the Catholic gentry in the vicinity of Oxford might interest themselves in procuring her the means and the permission; a thousand different things might happen, by any one of which she might for ever be lost to him—ay, and lost to one whom she might justly consider as already wilfully, and by his own neglect, lost to her.

These perturbed thoughts followed each other rapidly over his mind. He traversed the garden-walk with hurried steps—he gazed wildly round upon the darkening sky—the night-breeze moaned among the branches of the trees, and heaved the lake in slow sullen surges against the pebbled strand below him. Everything in earth and sky, in the past, the present, and the future, seemed alike waste, bleak, miserable to *him*. He smote upon his forehead, and felt as if he had laid his hand upon fire.

To this succeeded languor and total dejection. Reginald, weary of himself and of the world, passed a sleepless night, in rapid alternations of agony and listless sickness of the heart. He slept, after there was full daylight in his chamber, one of those short hot sleeps, that exhaust, in place of refreshing the frame—and he awoke in a fever.

For two days he continued in a state that rendered it impossible for him to quit his bed; he never lost the possession of his senses, but disease hung over his spirit, and thickened what was of itself dark enough into total gloom. His father sat watching by his bedside—his pale anxious face was ever there—every look, every whisper, shot new pain into Reginald's lacerated bosom. At last nature was worn out—the young man slept—a long deep sleep held him—he awoke cool, calm, perfectly collected—too weak to be miserable. Involuntary tears started in his eyes, as his father, bending over him, thanked God, in a fervent ejaculation of gratitude.

The next evening Reginald was able to sit up for an hour, supported with pillows, in an easy-chair, by the fire-side. The Vicar sat over against him, whispering gentle and affectionate words—but not suffering him to make any reply.

"My dear Reginald," said he, "you must not say anything—you must just listen to me—you must just hear me quietly, and if you have anything to say, you must keep it till to-morrow.—I have been thinking more of what we talked of the other evening. Upon further reflection, I rather apprehend it will, after all, be best for you to go back to college next month, as we had originally intended. You know what delight it would be for me to have you here; but that is not the only, no, nor the first matter we have to consider. Your staying away might expose us to many disagreeable things—young people will be curious and talkative. Frederick Chisney is going back directly, and we don't know what stories he might tell—I have no great faith in that young man, either in his kindness or in his prudence. My dear boy, I could not endure the thought of your being said to have incurred my displeasure—I fear your absence might be interpreted in that way. And besides, you have a duty which must be done, and perhaps the best way is to grapple with it at once. Nay, Reginald, I see that you had been disturbed about this matter—indeed I do. I pray you forget it now—banish it entirely from your mind, my dear boy; don't let one word more ever pass between us about it. When you get to Oxford, you will find what you want in your pocket-book. I have put the money there this morning, just that it might be off my mind; and I beg from my heart it may be off yours too. You must not speak, Reginald—I won't permit you to say anything—I see quite well what is in your thoughts. Now, do be comforted and composed—you shall go back to your college, and hold up your head among them all—you will be respected, I know you will. I know you will do all that I could wish you to do. I feel quite confident, that you will earn the favour and approbation of all your superiors, and when one does that, no fear of one's equals, my dear."

Reginald returned with feeble fingers the pressure of the kind man's hand. His heart had been at his lips all the while he was speaking, and yet, now he had made an end, he knew not what he would have said, even had he been permitted to speak freely. The Vicar, however, could not be mistaken as to his looks. The father's eye read relief in every glance. "It was even so," he said to himself, "my boy feared disgrace; and now that he knows he is not to encounter that, he

is soothed at once. To-morrow he will be himself again."

The Vicar, with this, left Reginald to himself. The young man got soon after into bed, and, weak as he was, he had strength enough to taste the luxury of falling asleep upon pleasing meditations.

In a day or two he was perfectly recovered, but the Vicar held firmly to what he had proposed, and avoided every recurrence to the painful topics. The week—the day of his departure was drawing near at hand. It seemed to be his constant endeavour to sweeten, by every act that kindness can teach, the few moments more his son was to spend in his society.

Frederick Chisney left the country a fortnight earlier than was necessary, in order to reach Oxford at the opening of the term; and, on the whole, Reginald was not sorry for this, for he probably thought he should be able to perform his journey more cheaply without than with such a companion. He was therefore looking forward to his solitary expedition, and indulging himself in such dreams as may be supposed to haunt the breast of any young man who has been three months absent from his mistress, and has the near prospect of seeing her again, and enjoying, moreover, his approaching release from the debts that had so long been a burden to his thoughts;—he was also enjoying the companionship of the father to whose kindness he had owed so much, and pleasing himself with fancying the gladness with which the Vicar would receive him, after an absence during which his time should really have been well and virtuously occupied, when a guest came to Lannwell, a guest whom he had never seen before—a man whose manners were as vulgar and disagreeable as his appearance was mean.

On the day preceding that fixed for his departure, he found this man sitting with his father, when he came in to dinner, and this without having received the smallest hint of any stranger being expected. The Vicar introduced him as his friend Mr. Pococke, of Manchester. That name conveyed nothing, for Reginald had never heard it before; but the longer he looked at and listened to the stranger, the more was he surprised that such a person should have anything to recommend him to his father.

The Vicar indeed treated him not only with civility, but betrayed in various ways, sufficiently intelligible to Reginald, that he wished to be left alone in his company. The young man could not but wonder at this, considering that it was the last evening of his stay at Lannwell. However, he took the hint, and left the table almost immediately after dinner.

He walked out, and remained in the fields for two or three hours, and when he returned, was told that the Vicar was busy with Mr. Pococke in the Library, and begged Reginald would excuse them till supper-time. "Indeed, sir," said old Susan, "my master seems to be very busy.—They've been tumbling all the books about so, you have no notion; and now they're writing, writing."

The man's conversation had been evidently that of an underbred, and, as Reginald thought, an ignorant man. This new affair of the books, therefore, increased very much his perplexity; nor, when they did meet at the supper-table, was anything said that could tend to explain this. Mr. Pococke sat late, and drank a good deal, and talked louder and louder, and more and more coarsely. Reginald was to set off very early the next morning, yet the Vicar suffered him to go to his bed without saying a word that could in any way relieve his curiosity as to this stranger.

About five o'clock, Reginald drew his father's curtain to bid him farewell. The Vicar was quite awake. "God bless my dear boy!" said he.—"There were some things I would fain have spoken with you about, but Pococke occupied me so much, I could not get any opportunity; and, after all, I believe 'tis as well as it is. Let me hear from you as soon as you have been a week in your College."

"And who is Mr. Pococke, father?"

"A gentleman I have some little business with, Reginald; he will probably remain here for two or three days."

Reginald perceived reserve in his father's eye, and said not a word more. Reserve in that quarter was a thing he was so little used to, that a certain degree of pain attended the observation he could not avoid making. However, there was the very soul of tenderness in his father's look as he squeezed his hand for the last time; and the young man felt, when he turned from his bedside, that whatever was the mystery, there was no unkindness in the concealment.

It was a chill hazy morning, the mist lay upon the lake, and none of the hills upon the other side were visible. As he mounted his horse at the vicarage-gate, he cast his eye round him, and thought Lannwell had never worn so melancholy an aspect. The air, however, braced his nerves, and he had not ridden far ere all his thoughts had flown before him to the termination of his journey.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A HAPPY MEETING.

OXFORD, at the opening of Michaelmas term, never fails to present a scene of great merriment and hilarity. These young companions meeting together after a separation of three or four months, bring with them new stories and new spirits, and tread with a bounding step the soil which is endeared to

them by the sense of freedom from domestic authority, and the recollection of a thousand feats of undisturbed and untrammelled gaiety. They take possession of their chambers again with all the joy and pride of independence; and, seated once more around an equal board, they fling far from them all dull remembrances of scenes where they have found themselves treated as boys, and see in every unrebuked bumper, and hear in every fearless jest, the assertion of liberty, and the pledge of manhood. Their hearts are open and light as the day—their nerves are new-strung; and last, not least, their purses are replenished.

The heaviest purse, however, that came on this great day to * * *, came in company with a heart that was by no means of the lightest. Reginald arrived among his old friends just as the dinner-bell was ringing, and they were all standing together in the quadrangle, waiting until the advent of the high-table gentry should permit them to enter the hall. He was received with open arms by every one—every face beamed with gladness and kindness—and a dozen different voices shouted all together,—"Wine with me to-day, Dalton."—"Dalton, I say, my dear fellow, you're not engaged for this evening?"—"Reginald, my hearty, I count upon you; I have brought up some prime pheasants with me from Shropshire."—"Dalton, my buck, you promised to come to me before the long vacation."—"Reginald, I say, Reginald, the old set are to be with the bachelors," &c &c. &c.

Reginald resisted all these temptations the more easily, because there were so many of them. A single quiet whisper might perhaps have seduced him; but these parties, he saw, were all to be large and noisy ones, and against such he was, because he was resolved to be, on his guard. However, the reader will perhaps give him the less credit for this piece of virtue, when he recollects that the youth had before him the prospect, not of his own solitary chamber, but of Mr. Keith's tea-table, and perhaps Ellen Hesketh's smile.

He pretended to his young friends that he was engaged out of college, and was on this plea suffered to retire to his own room after dinner, without molestation. When he came to examine into the state of matters there, he found his mantelpiece garnished with a portentous collection of tradesmen's bills—[indeed the academical shopkeepers are always shrewd enough to make the first day of term their Christmas]—and when he looked over the file of papers, he no doubt shuddered to think with what unmitigated horror he must have done so, had he deferred his confession to the Vicar, and faced them without such preparation as he was now master of.

He sat down to reckon over the amount of the demands, and I am very sure nobody will hear with the smallest surprise, that he found it considerably greater than he had calculated, although it was most true, that, when he made his calculation, he supposed himself to be making at the least a sufficiently large one. The fact is, that nobody in the world ever made any such calculation *against* himself, without falling into the same kind of blunder. There seems to be a sort of natural instinct concerned in it, which, however, is of the less importance (at least in such cases as Reginald's), as, by a wise arrangement, a sharp and accurate instinct is lodged elsewhere, quite sufficient to counterpoise this oblivious tendency or frailty.

Reginald, in a word, after going over the whole affair once and again very leisurely and cautiously, was compelled in the end to perceive, that there was really no mistake in his arithmetic—that his debts exceeded what was provided for defraying them, by a sum which he knew it was quite impossible he should save out of the allowance on which he had to support himself. What was to be done? To apply again to the Vicar—this was more than he could bear to think of. Was there no way in which it might be possible for him to increase his income by honest exertion of his own? He knew of none—but he felt that there was nothing honest to which he could not stoop, and stoop with pride. It occurred to him, that he had heard of some young men of the University being employed about the Clarendon—the instant that idea suggested itself to him, he grasped at it with all the usual rapidity of his imagination. "Mr. Barton," he said to himself, "has constant connection with that establishment: I will tell him my object; surely he will aid me; I know he will. The time for this labour shall be taken from the hours that those around me devote to their jovial parties—if that be not enough, more shall be taken from my sleep. It shall not interfere with my studies—perchance it may aid me even in them."

To follow and obey the impulses of his imagination was his vice and his virtue. He repaired immediately to Mr. Barton's apartments. He was found, as usual, busied amidst his books, and after the first salutation, which was rather a cold one, was over, Reginald could not help observing, that the Recluse was somewhat annoyed with being interrupted at such an hour.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said he, "for intruding upon you in the evening; but, to tell the truth, I have some business—I have a favour to ask of you—Will you permit me to speak?"

"It is my duty to hear you, Mr. Dalton," said the tutor, shutting the book that lay before him; "but, before you say anything, are you aware, that I have heard frequently of late from your father?"

"Then you know already, sir, what I could not have told without great pain. You are aware, Mr. Barton, that I have been

very foolish—You are aware of the faults that I have committed?—"

The tutor nodded a grave assent.

"And of the too great kindness with which my father has treated me?"

"Nay, sir, it is not for me to speak as to these matters. I fear you have long ago become convinced of the truth of what, I think, I told you pretty distinctly the first time we met, that I was not the sort of person you should have fixed upon as your tutor. Nay, Mr. Dalton, I don't want any speeches; I *hope* things could not have fallen so, had you been more under the eye of a superior. I blame myself, young man, and I am very sorry, indeed, for my old friend."

"You know how he has behaved to me, sir—you know how excessive his kindness has been."

"Ay, young man, I do know it has been so. Sir, I had in my youth a very different sort of parent to deal with. My father was a severe, stern man, and he punished severely my errors; yet, now that he is in the grave, I look back to him with sorrow, and to my own transgressions of his will—all at least but one of them—with shame. Young man, you have prepared a sad retrospect indeed for your manhood."

"O! Mr. Barton, you need not torture me thus. Be assured I have felt—I do feel all this—but what is done, sir, cannot be recalled. Fain would I do anything now, that may show how sincere is my repentance."

"Then, do your duty, sir. Labour, labour diligently and zealously—you have time at least before ye."

Reginald, without farther preface, told Mr. Barton exactly the situation in which he found his affairs to be, and concluded his statement with the request which he had meditated. The tutor paused for a while, after he had made his wishes known, and then said,—"Come, Mr. Dalton, I have been doing you injustice. I see, my young friend, that you are in earnest. I fear—but, however, it is not my part to suggest these things. Come to me at eleven o'clock to-morrow, and I think I may promise that I shall have some news for you. The chapel bell has rung out. Farewell for the present." When he had said this, Mr. Barton squeezed Reginald's hand more warmly than he had ever before done, and dismissed him.

Reginald had not for a long while been so happy as he was at the moment when he left his tutor's apartment. He went into chapel with a glow on his cheek—a glow how different from that which he should have brought thither, had he spent the last two hours as every other youth within these walls had spent them—a glow that came from the *mind*.

That glow was still on his cheek, and his heart beat quick and high in his bosom as he traversed, when the service was at an end, the well-known way to St. Clements. A doubt—a passing shade of doubt—had sometimes hovered over his fancy before; but now there was no room for anything that partook of doubt. Everything cold—everything of hesitation—everything of fear, had vanished from beside the kindling excitation which had taken possession of his thoughts. He advanced to the house with a rapid step, and knocked with an eager hand. A light footstep was heard within. The sweetest voice in the world whispered through the key-hole, —"Who is there? is it you, Mr. Keith?"

"It is I," said Reginald—"Open, I pray you, my dear Ellen." And the next moment the door was opened. It was almost quite dark, and he could not see the workings of her face; but he felt the trembling of the hand that was half seized, half surrendered—he felt the beating of the bosom that he strained to his with involuntary strength—he felt the eloquent blood rush into, and in the same breath desert again, the timid trembling lip—that lip had never touched before.

Ellen started after a moment, and withdrew herself from Reginald's arms. "O, Mr. Dalton," she whispered, "how can you behave so? My uncle is not at home—What will he say if he finds you here with me alone?"

"Say, Ellen? God bless my soul, what should he say? But how is he?—Tell me, my dear girl—Is he well, is he strong, is he quite himself again?—And how has the summer gone over with you? Come, Ellen, my own Ellen! you must sit down by me, and let us talk over all that has happened since we parted—indeed you must—I cannot think of leaving you now."

The poor girl suffered herself to be persuaded, and led Reginald into the parlour. The fear that she was in some sort doing what was wrong, could not prevent her from being happy, nor teach her the art of concealing that she was so. They sat together—sometimes there was not a word said for minutes on either side, and then would come a flow of tender words, or a more eloquent whisper of tenderness. But why attempt to describe the indescribable? Let it be enough, that Reginald poured out all his heart—told all his feelings, the painful and the pleasurable, and enjoyed that luxury to which earth has nothing equal—the luxury of feeling that there was one gentle bosom which made all that was his its own—which partook, and ever would partake, the best and the worst that had befallen, or ever could befall him.

It was perhaps just as well for our young people that Mr. Keith had been dining that day with a very gay and pleasant party, at the house of Dr. R——, one of the few leading characters of the University, with whom he had formed acquaintance. To say truth, the good old man had conceived a most warm and fatherly affection for Reginald Dalton; but he had, in his absence, made up his mind, that his own duty to Miss Hesketh must

prevent him from suffering them to be very much together, under what he rightly supposed to be the present doubtful situation of Reginald's affairs. Besides, he certainly had a feeling that it was very possible Mr. Dalton might disapprove of this alliance altogether; and, last not least, he would have been anxious to put so very young a man's attachment to the test of time, even had circumstances been different from what they were in all other respects. When, however, he entered his own house that evening, he was, to speak gently, a little elevated with wine, and that stimulus never failed to put him in a mood of such perfect good humour, that it was no wonder his prudential resolutions gave way when he saw them together; and that, reading their happiness in their eyes and their blushes, he could not find it in his heart to do or say anything that might tend to throw a damp upon their young spirits. He tried to look a little grave on his first entrance, and shook his head once or twice; but the fire was bright, and Ellen had his slippers, and his pipe, and his coffee, all in readiness for him; and Reginald's joy in seeing him so much re-established was so visible in every look and gesture of the young man, that, altogether, the priest found the utmost he could do was to shake his head a few times more, light his tube, and sit down between them, a partaker, not a chider, of their happiness.

Reginald told all his story over again, and Mr. Keith listened to its progress with scarcely less interest, and to its conclusion with scarcely less satisfaction, than Miss Hesketh had done. "Ah, yes, my young friend," said he, "I see we shall make a man of you yet. You will find, my dear, that the sweetest morsel in the world is the first your own hands help you to. Go on, Reginald, keep a right heart, and all will go well with you. Your father is a good man, my dear, and a good Christian; and, let me tell you, it should be no little matter for you to think that you have it in your power to make that kind heart happy, if you but do your duty.

"Some day," said Reginald, "some happy, happy day, I hope you and he, sir, will meet and be friends; then, indeed, I shall know what happiness is."

Reginald looked to Ellen, and read the echo of his feeling in one soft glance. The worthy old man, without saying anything, pressed his hand. The clock struck at that moment, and Reginald rose immediately, for he was anxious to be in College ere the gates were closed. The Priest whispered in his ear, "When are we to see you again!—Ellen, my love, what say you?—Well, well, dears, I see how it is; we shall not shut our doors, although you come back to-morrow and tell us what Mr. Barton says to you."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DUNS.

NEXT day, when Reginald waited, according to appointment, upon his tutor, he found there a certain Oxford bookseller, to whom, after finding that the printing establishment of the University was not at that time in want of any such services as our young man had proposed offering, Mr. Barton had applied for something of the same sort, and, as it happened, with greater success. In a word, Reginald was forthwith entrusted, Mr. Barton vouching very liberally for his fitness to execute the task, with the labour of correcting the press for an edition of one of the Greek historians, which this Mecænas was just about to commence—and though under any other circumstances, no doubt, this occupation must have presented itself in the light of a piece of most wearisome drudgery, to say nothing of the mean amount of remuneration that was to attend it, Reginald Dalton retired from the ratification of the bargain with feelings, not only of satisfaction, but even of exultation.

His life soon shaped itself into a course of equal and regular occupation. His debts, all but those which, because the sums were the smallest, he considered as of the least importance to him, were paid. His mind, the heaviest part of that burden thrown off, bent the whole of its powers to study during the greater part of the day; some hours were devoted to the humble task which he had undertaken, and dull as these were, he was sustained in them by the consciousness of a virtuous motive, besides the additional comfort which he drew from perceiving, that the manner in which they were spent must inevitably be of great advantage in the end to his scholarship, by reason of the nice and precise accuracy of attention which he was compelled to bestow upon matters, that otherwise he could scarcely have been blamed for almost entirely neglecting The sneers which he sometimes encountered from the young men about him, on account of the pertinacity with which he avoided their parties of pleasure, he learned to endure more easily in process of a little time; and ere a month had passed, these were well-nigh discontinued on all hands. The style in which he acquitted himself at the public examinations in the College-hall, attracted the notice of his superiors, and compelled the respect of his equals. His laborious day generally terminated in a short visit to Mr. Keith's, where the approving smile of Ellen rewarded him for what was past, and gave him new courage for the toil that was to come; while the paternal commendations of the old Priest afforded a kindred, and scarcely a feebler stimulus. Every week he wrote to his father, and his letters exhibited that openness and freedom of communication, which it is difficult or impossible for one that

is conscious of being engaged in evil courses, to make or even to counterfeit, when addressing such a person as the Vicar. His father's answers overflowed with kindness and satisfaction—and, in a word, perhaps I should not be exceeding the mark, if I said that Reginald, since he first left his father's fireside, had never before tasted the calm sweets of perfect mental repose, — nay, that the happiness which he experienced now, the happiness of approving love and of exerted manhood, was something infinitely higher and richer than that which he had enjoyed, even during the most innocent and the most careless years of his dreaming boyhood.

During the best part of two months, this fortunate state of things continued. It was then that, from various unhappily coinciding circumstances, a shade of gloom began once more to invest his mind, his affairs, and his prospects.

It has been mentioned above, that, in regard to his debts, Reginald had allowed those which were of the least amount to lie over, in his anxiety to get rid of such as alarmed him by their heaviness and magnitude. This proceeding, however natural under all the circumstances of the case, was exactly what any person of larger experience in the world must have taken especial care to avoid. The sums still due were due to comparatively poor people ; and these, besides the inconvenience to which non-payment really did expose some of them, were all extremely incensed, when they found that their debtor had found means to discharge obligations of very superior weight to their richer and more fortunate brothers of the trade. They waited for a few weeks without murmuring ; but when another term had elapsed, and still no word of money from Mr. Dalton, several began to lose patience, and to pester him first with ugly little scraggy wafered notes, and then with the bodily apparition of their own lean unwashed faces in his apartment. Determined not to draw upon the Vicar, and compelled to reserve the pittance his own exertion had enabled him to muster, for the acquittal of his debt to the Buttery-book of * * *, our young gentleman was grievously annoyed with things that, under any other circumstances, would have administered matter of high merriment to him. Raw as he was, he had sense enough to observe, that, if he had not paid one single sixpence of all the debt he had contracted, but, on the contrary, continued to go on in the same career of carelessness and extravagance, which he had so penitently abandoned, he should have escaped, at least for a long while, from this species of visible and tangible vexation. He perceived that the striking reduction he had made in his mode of living, had excited more attention to him and his affairs, than the most riotous profusion of expenditure could have done ; that these mean spirits had penetrated the secret of his domestic difficulties ; and that he must expect to be harassed every succeeding day with greater pertinacity and impertinence of solicitation.

When he allowed these gentry to make their way into his study, the cold dirty glances with which they accompanied and enforced their unwelcome rhetoric, haunted him for half the day after. If he followed the common Oxonian example, and "sported oak," the single tap, the shuffling of feet, the hem of disappointment, found their way through the panel, and perhaps hurt his nerves, even more than actual confronting of the visitor might have done. One inflexible and iron countenance was sure to be discovered each day, when he opened his door to go down to dinner in the hall—waiting there with a settled frown, until the diurnal whisper should have been answered with the diurnal shake, and then vanishing with a darker and more moody tinge upon the furrowed brow. Another spirit of a lighter and politer order came only once a-week, and never came twice at the same hour, now establishing himself at Reginald's fire-side, ere he had left his bed in the morning—now appalling him with the profoundest of obeisances in the street or the quadrangle —now causing the door to be expanded by a deceitful double knock, a liberty entirely unwarrantable in these plebeian fingers—in a word, practising a thousand new artifices and devices, all, whatever might have been the fond hope of the individual, alike incapable of rendering a whit more palatable the one unvarying sentence with which they all alike ended.

These disagreeably officious guests not only annoyed the young man's feelings, but through them, injured him in matters of a more substantial nature. The annoyance that irritated and perplexed him rendered him incapable of attending to his books and papers with the same steady zeal which he had heretofore obeyed and enjoyed. They often kept him idle ; and although he knew that poverty was the sure consequence of yielding, he had not the stubborn self-command to wrestle successfully with the "*improba Siren Desidia.*" In short, he sunk too frequently into a listless and desponding mood, the unhappy effect of which was to make that exertion, by which alone it could have been baffled and put to flight, appear as something utterly loathsome and insufferable.

The change which all this produced on Reginald's aspect and demeanour, could not escape the eyes of Ellen Hesketh ; but, alas! seeing the change, she guessed not at the cause. Mr. Keith had again begun to droop ; this filled Ellen's own heart with pensiveness, and knowing how deeply Reginald sympathised with her feelings in regard to that kind old friend and protector, she was at no loss to account for all the darkness that hovered on her lover's brow, without penetrating into

his own secret griefs. But indeed, it is probable, that *as yet*, when Reginald was with her and the Priest, she might have erred, after all, if she had attributed his visible dejection to any other cause but that which really suggested itself to her affectionate imagination.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DOUBTFUL FRIENDSHIP.

REGINALD was sitting by himself one morning in a very deplorable state of pensiveness, when he was surprised by the receipt of a note from Mr. Keith. The old man began with saying that he felt himself better that day than he had done for two or three weeks; he then expressed his apprehension that Miss Hesketh had been injuring herself of late by too strict confinement to the house, and concluded with mentioning, that an old widow of his congregation, whom Reginald had occasionally met with at St. Clements, was going to a concert the same evening, and had invited Ellen to be of her party. The scheme, Mr. Keith said, had easily met with his own approbation, and that, after a little hesitation, Ellen herself had agreed to accompany Mrs. Gibbons, not doubting that Mr. Dalton would be happy to go along with them, and see her home in safety at night.

Our young man, although even the cost of a concert ticket was something to him in the present situation of his finances, could not, of course, hesitate about this affair. He dressed himself and accompanied Mrs. Gibbons and Ellen to the scene of their amusement, and enjoyed, during the intervals of the music, the charming conversation of his fair one, who—rejoicing in the favourable change which seemed to have taken place in Mr. Keith's health, and elevated with those feelings naturally excited by the spectacle of a gay saloon and a brilliant company, and the luxuries of harmony, and the presence of a lover who could not, more than herself, be insensible to such fascinations—looked and whispered everything that was cheerful, cheering, and angelic. Between the second and third acts, Frederick Chisney, with whom the reader will easily suppose Reginald had of late held but rare communication, came up with an air of kindness which it was impossible to resist, and after conversing for a little while about Lannwell, Thorwold, and their common friends in the country, begged Reginald to introduce him to Miss Hesketh, who seemed, as he said, to have retained no recollection of his person. This request was conveyed in a whisper, and accompanied with some flattering compliments and congratulations, which were not without their effect on Reginald's vanity. He did what Chisney had asked, and that young gentleman, nothing daunted by a little reserve in the outset, found means, ere the concert was at an end, to charm Mrs. Gibbons, by the gaiety of his address, and the handsomeness of his person; and to insinuate himself into some favour also with Miss Hesketh, who could not but observe that Frederick concealed, beneath a surface of frivolity, a great share of sense, shrewdness, and wit. He knew everybody—he explained everything—he criticised the music with taste, and the company with humour; and altogether the time passed so merrily, that there was not one of the four who did not wish very devoutly the entertainment had been to last twice its hours.

Mrs. Gibbons, however, had tacked something more to the musical part of her scheme, and now announced, not without throwing an additional spice of good-humoured satisfaction into her round plump physiognomy, that she would consider herself but an ill-treated woman, if Miss Hesketh and the two young gentlemen refused to partake of a couple of roasted fowls and sausages, and a can of mulled elder-wine, which she had ordered to be in readiness at her dwelling. As that was in the immediate vicinity of Mr. Keith's house, our sparks, who were to escort the young lady thither, were easily persuaded to approve of this arrangement; and Ellen herself, after some little argumentation, found it impossible to refuse her consent. The old lady conducted them into a snug parlour, where a blazing fire and a snowy table-cloth already gave promise of good cheer. The substantial comforts of which she had discoursed, were not long of making their appearance, and great justice was done to their merits by all concerned. An hour was spent in the happiest and gayest style imaginable—Ellen smiled, the landlady chuckled, and Reginald forgot all his griefs, and Frederick Chisney's admiration of the young lady was only inferior to that which shone in the modest glances of his companion.

Reginald and Chisney, after seeing Miss Hesketh safe within her uncle's gates, walked up the town arm-in-arm, talking to each other with more of the freedom of their first companionship than they had for a long while been accustomed to. Chisney rated Reginald kindly and good-humouredly upon the subject of his new seclusion, and told him over and over again, that whatever reasons he might have for avoiding parties and expenses, he could have no good reason for withdrawing himself entirely from the society of the oldest friend he had in Oxford; a friend who would at any time be glad to give up a noisy company for the sake of spending an evening quietly with him, in hearing and telling old stories, and discussing the authors with whom each, or both, might have been occupied. This sort of thing was said with an air of such sincerity and affection, that Reginald could not help feeling something like compunction with himself for having, in so far, doubted the

friendship, and avoided the society, of his old associate. They parted in high cordiality, but not until Reginald had promised to spend the next evening at Christ-Church, in the way which Chisney had proposed.

I am extremely sorry to say, that Mr. Chisney's behaviour, on this occasion, was by no means of the most ingenuous. That he had originally liked Reginald Dalton, and sought a simple and natural gratification in associating with him, is true. It is also true, that his vanity had been flattered with the opportunity which Reginald afforded him, of showing off his own skilful qualifications in the various walks of dissipation, before the eyes of a clever, and admiring, and emulating fresh-man. But the disciple had soon equalled the proficiency of the preceptor—too soon, alas! for his own welfare, and too soon also for Chisney's expectation or approbation. In a word, Reginald had, ere long, come to be Chisney's rival in many of those things on which he chiefly rested his pride, his superior in some, and his inferior in but a few. The young man had not made this rapid progress without some feelings of self-complacency, and more than once words or looks had escaped him, too expressive of those feelings, to find favour with his quondam guide, who still hankered after the retaining of that air of superiority, which he had at first been entitled to assume, and that tribute of deference and submission which he had supposed Reginald was to pay long and regularly, but which, he now perceived, was likely to fall into total desuetude, if not oblivion. In short, Reginald's successes, in more styles than we think it at all necessary to particularise, during his first Oxonian campaign, had kindled certain sparks of jealousy, slumbering in the disposition of his friend; and as such feelings seldom exist anywhere, without being, through some sort of natural instinct, it would seem, detected by those most nearly concerned, these two young men had arrived at the beginning of this last winter in their respective colleges, with but little inclination to renew the strict intimacy in which they had lived during the preceding season.

Reginald's method of living, for the last two or three months, had not, of course, tended to break down the barriers of coldness, to which we have now alluded. Chisney, alike fearful as fond of ridicule, would, under no circumstances, have desiderated the reputation of living as the bosom friend of one, whose style of existence resembled that now adopted by our repentant hero. Reginald, on the other hand, was about as proud as Frederick was vain; and conscious that he was doing what was right, and at last, after dear lessons, sensible to the luxury of that consciousness, he was in no danger either of pressing himself on his retreating friend, or of deserting the path he had chosen in compliment to his fancies. The truth is, that our youth had tasted the bitter dregs of the cup of folly, and whatever might have happened, had a totally new set of sirens invited him to fill and quaff it again, he was quite proof against that particular species of seduction, the consequences of yielding to which were so fresh in his recollection.

Why, then, this sudden and unlooked-for up-making? The answer is very briefly—Mr. Chisney had been quite overcome with admiration by the radiant beauty, the charming sprightliness, the universal gracefulness, of Miss Ellen Hesketh. In the ardour of the moment, he determined to see more of this fair and forlorn creature. He knew nothing, perhaps as yet he even suspected nothing, of the solemn ties which existed between her and Dalton; but he saw quite plainly, that it was only through Dalton's means he himself could hope to have access to her in the first instance. In the hope that Mrs. Gibbons might be of subordinate service in the same matter, he, the vainest and the gayest of Oxonian beaux, did not hesitate to lavish all his arts of flattery upon that vulgar old body; but it was by restoring his intimacy of companionship with Reginald, that he expected to gain admittance to the domestic society in which Miss Hesketh lived. Once fairly introduced and established there, he did not doubt that he should soon find, in his own many admirable qualifications, the means of pushing his success as far as circumstances might induce him to think desirable.

The fact is, that one may search the world over without meeting with a creature worthy, in regard to a certain sort of overbearing, intolerable arrogance, to be set in competition with a finished young buck of Rhedycina. Somehow or other, Heaven knows whence or how, the notion has taken complete and ineradicable root among them, that they are the true "*prima virorum*"—above all, they have taught themselves to regard everything, and everybody connected in any way with that town, and not connected with their university, as dust, absolute dust—men, women, and children, as all alike belonging to a separate, distinct, and unchangeable caste, as different from their own as the coarsest blue delft-ware is from the most precious nankin china. The men are all jumbled together under the one comprehensive epithet of *raff;* and the women, however fair, however lovely, are considered as but amiable little *bourgeoises*, who ought to look on themselves as but too happy in being permitted to furnish the most transitory amusement to themselves—the *élite* of the world. In their gowns and tufted-caps, they reverence the robes and coronets of an inalienable and unapproachable *noblesse;* and decked out in these all-exalting insignia, you shall see the son of a London tailor strut past an Oxford tailor on the street of a city, of which he is perhays mayor, with a beak as extravagantly aduncated, as if there were "more difference

between their bloods, than there is betwixt red wine and Rhenish."

In these prejudices Mr. Frederick Chisney partook as largely as any of his compeers—if not more excusably, still certainly much less absurdly, than a vast proportion of them. The obscure Scotch-German priest of an obscure little Catholic chapel, in the suburbs of Oxford, appeared to him in the light of a personage of the most humble order possible; and his niece, immeasurably removed, as she seemed to be, from all contact with the only female society in Oxford that he deigned to consider as in any sort *comme il faut*, was nothing in his eyes but a beautiful *grisette*, by a flirtation, carried how far soever, with whom, no serious consequences of any kind could ever be entailed upon *him*. Mr. Chisney, therefore, no sooner saw and admired, than he in fancy conquered; but his passions, though sufficiently inflammable, being by no means suffered to cloud his judgment, he perceived all the propriety of going cautiously to work *in limine*, and determined, in opening his trenches, to take full advantage of Dalton's previous acquaintance with the localities of the soil, and the temper, character, and resources of the besieged.

Mr. Chisney (for passions of some sorts are at times heated rather than cooled by a night's consultation of the pillow) rose in the morning even fuller of all these pretty fancies than he had lain down. Though he had received Reginald's promise to come to his rooms the same evening, his revived affection could not brook even this delay, and he called at * * * College, in the course of the forenoon, to ask his friend's company in a walk over the Port Meadow. Reginald, who had as usual been fretted with sundry "monotapic" visitors, did not open his door until Chisney's voice made assurance double sure this was no cunning citizen turning his knuckles into gay deceivers. Even when he did open, something remained on his physiognomy, which, taken together with the delay that had occurred, soon suggested the true state of affairs to Mr. Frederick. But he had scarcely sat down ere one of the "unwelcome race, in evil hour begot," did really make his invasion. Reginald seemed to hesitate about answering the knock, and Chisney whispered, with a knowing look,—"Are ye short, Reginald? Come, come, pay off the dog and have done with him." So saying, the young gentleman exhibited a well-furnished pocket-book. And "Nay, nay," he proceeded, still in the same low note, "you're not going to stand upon trifles with me, Dalton?"

Reginald, half surprised, half unable to resist, accepted the small sum which he knew would satisfy the visitor, whose visage, *soit dit en passant*, he had already found means to reconnoitre through a crack in the lath and plaster of his coal-hole. A smile of the most benignant blandness instantaneously relaxed the rigid lips of the creditor; but perhaps of all the three, the one most pleased with this little occurrence was Chisney himself.

Reginald walked out with Chisney according to his request, and the reader will not be astonished to hear, that although they set out in exactly the opposite direction, it was so contrived, that they must needs re-enter the city by the way of St. Clements. When they came to the Priest's door, Chisney said, —what Dalton had been thinking ever since they came within sight of it,—that they ought to call and inquire whether the young lady had received no damage from being out so late over-night. And in accordingly they both went, Reginald having, in the fulness of his heart, undertaken that Mr. Keith would not consider his friend as an intruder. The old man, as it happened, was still better this day than he had been the day before, and Ellen had just been gratifying him very much by playing over to him on her guitar some of the airs she had heard at her concert. He was delighted to see Reginald, and though at first there was nothing beyond bare politeness in his reception of Chisney, that knowing fellow made so good a use of his opportunity, that ere they rose to depart, the Priest was quite captivated with his address and conversation. The young man, in fact, had said very little, but he had given all his attention to the senior, and while Reginald was talking to Ellen, played off, on the other side of the fire-place, all the arts of drawing out, listening, and assenting. He had dropped hints of his contempt for the common Oxonian prejudices against Catholics—he had quoted a verse or two of Allan Ramsay—he had sworn that if he were reduced to Clarence's election, he would expire in a butt of old hock—*à propos* to the priest's Meerschaum which graced the mantel-piece, he had taken occasion to laud Sir Walter Raleigh, and the philosophic luxury of the Nicotian creed; and last, not least, he had admired the Mezzotinto print of Marshal Keith, and, of course, been entertained in return with some anecdotes touching the consanguinity of the ancient Lords of Dunnottar, and the bold Barons of Keithquhangs.

The effect of all this was, that Mr. Keith invited Reginald to bring his friend to dinner with him in the course of the following week; and then so adroitly did Chisney pursue the advantage he had gained, that, ere he went away, the Priest had promised, his health permitting, to give him his revenge ere long, in his chambers at Christ-Church.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CHISNEY STRIVES TO SUPPLANT REGINALD.

CHISNEY took such care to remind the Priest of the promise above-mentioned, that the old man, ere a fortnight was over, took the opportunity of some fine frosty weather, and nerves braced thereby, to redeem it. Reginald, out of respect for Mr. Keith, broke through all his rules, and joined and enjoyed the party, which was exactly what a party should be; for the host was indefatigable in his attention and complaisance, the guests were few and well-assorted, the wines were Latimer's, and the dinner was cooked in Christ-Church.

The worthy old Priest was so much the happier, that he had of late (from his situation here, and from the state of his health) been but little accustomed to those pleasures of the festive board, for which a Scotch youth and a German manhood had inspired him with a pretty keen relish. He got into great glee in the course of the evening, and even laid aside so much of his sacerdotal dignity, as to contribute more than one song to the entertainment of the company. His songs were German, and he possessed a faculty, rarely met with out of Germany, of imitating with his voice all manner of musical instruments, from the organ to the Jew's-harp, which new and delightful accomplishment was continually exhibited between the stanzas, and in swelling the chorus of his strains. Above all, he excited prodigious admiration among his youthful auditors, by the exquisite vigour and grace with which he gave that famous old monastic Anacreontic,

> "Disce bene, Clerice, virgines amare,
> Wohl ist mir im grünen waldt," &c.

—so much so, that Mr. Chisney took occasion to declare, that he for one would think it a shame to remain any longer in ignorance of the fine and sonorous language, which at present concealed from him the exact meaning and connection of the spirit-stirring ditty.

Mr. Keith forthwith favoured them with an extemporary translation of the German parts of the song; and then Chisney's rapture rose to even a higher pitch than before. The Priest and he soon got into a committee upon German roots, German gutturals, Goethe, Schiller, Archenholz, Klopstock, Wieland, and Hagedorn. Old Keith, whose lips had so long been sealed upon these charming topics, now expatiated in glowing whispers, bumpers of some delicate enough Johannisberg, which Chisney had procured for the occasion, washing down every dissertation. Pipes and tobacco, in scorn of all Christ-Church niceties, were introduced; and Chisney, at the risk of mortal sickness, filled and smoked like a dragon. A cloud of fragrant obscurity, more delectably opaque than that which enshrouded the endearments of Jupiter and Juno on the summit of Ida, completed the privacy, and thickened the confidence—until, in the process of his exaltation, the old Priest at last hinted, that, since there was no German teacher in the University, he himself would be too happy to initiate this young enthusiast in the true High Saxon pronunciation, and to introduce him to some acquaintance with the glorious masterpieces of Teutonic genius, so shamefully unappreciated on this side of the water.

The fervour of gratitude with which Mr. Frederick Chisney embraced this beneficent offer, may easily be imagined by the reader.

The arrangement, thus hastily and easily accomplished, answered all Mr. Chisney's expectations, so far as the worthy Keith was concerned. He had taken particular care to fix upon an hour at which he knew Dalton to be strictly engaged within his own college; and thus he had the Priest's lessons all to himself, which, to say truth, Reginald regretted the less, as he flattered himself he should in due time have abundant opportunities of studying the German tongue under the auspices of a still more agreeable teacher.

Meantime Chisney pushed his advantage. He had not indeed received many lessons, ere the returning infirmities of his ancient preceptor interrupted their sequence; but ere this he had established himself so firmly in the old man's good graces, that that circumstance came to be of little importance. The worse Mr. Keith's health was, the better excuse had he for being a daily visitor in St. Clements. He timed his calls, so that he but seldom encountered Dalton there; and by degrees he even contrived to have it so, that, without exciting any sort of surprise, his diurnal inquiries were not rarely made at seasons when the invalid himself could not be visible—and Miss Hesketh alone was in a condition to receive and entertain him.

Lively, cheerful, well-informed, and consummately artful in the affectation of deep and sincere interest and sympathy, as he was, it is no wonder that his visits were the reverse of disagreeable to a young lady, naturally of a happy social disposition, living in so solitary a manner, and in continual attendance upon a frail and drooping old man, whose spirits, high as they were in common, could not always withstand the depressing influences of his situation; but this, though much, was not all.

Reginald Dalton's troubles had been thickening all this while around him. The paying of the one dun, whom Chisney's casual presence had enabled him to dismiss, had of course served only to embitter the spleen, and redouble the attacks, of the others. And upon the heels of all this came another, and a still more serious evil. The work on which he had been occupied was drawing near to a close—and when he made any inquiries after the prospect of another engagement of the same species, his bibliopolic Mecænas had, on divers

occasions, shrugged up his shoulders, intimating that his spirit of adventure rarely went beyond one speculation of that kind *per annum*. He saw, therefore, the near likelihood of being left exactly in the same painful situation, from which this little job had, to a certain extent, relieved him ; and the more he meditated upon this, and his determined duns, and Keith's illness, and the darkness which, in the event of its terminating ere long fatally, hung over the future destinies of his mistress —the more dismal were the colours which everything assumed, the more did his hope, and even perhaps his resolution, droop.

That when the heart is sick, the temper is, in frail human breasts, but too apt to catch a tinge of sourness, we must all know very well from experience, from observation, or from both. It was even so with this unfortunate young gentleman. It need not be disguised, that the distresses which preyed upon his bosom irritated, while they gnawed ; that his brow wore a shade of melancholy, which at times deepened into sullenness ; that his mode of speaking partook occasionally of the hasty and the splenetic ; that starts of peevishness chequered the settled gloom of his despondence. Even in the presence of Miss Hesketh, these symptoms of internal laceration could not always be concealed. The poor girl observed them with eyes quickened by the most delicate and tender attachment. She questioned him, and, such, alas! may be the waywardness of a stung and exacerbated spirit, his answers, brief, mysterious, and half-impatient, were sometimes but little calculated to allay the uneasiness of her affectionate bosom.

The bursts of fervid tenderness, and the gushings of deep confiding sorrow, that in less moody moments flowed from him, and blended both their hearts in the sad and solemn luxuries of the most passionate communion—these indeed atoned for all. Nevertheless, it was not to be wondered at, if Ellen Hesketh's gentle breast, wounded and harassed with these painful alternations, partook at times of the irritability, as well as of the dejection, of her lover—nor that in these, by far the most unhappy of her hours, she found something to soothe and to refresh in the calm, graceful, ever-varying interest of Mr. Chisney's conversation — his airy good-humour, checked and restrained only by concern for the malady of her own best friend, a civility that had long ere now glided into the warmth of kindness, and flatteries not the less insidious, because they were lightly, cautiously, guardedly, and apparently involuntarily, if not unconsciously, administered.

In the mean time, this knowing fellow was by no means neglecting the old Priest. His visits were occasionally admitted, even when Mr. Keith was confined to his bed-chamber, and he never failed to cheer and enliven the invalid ere he left him.

He found means, on some of these occasions, to get into rather confidential conversation with the old man—he took care to ask and to receive some advice with an air of great humility and thankfulness—and, on the other hand, Mr. Keith did not hesitate to communicate some of his own little subjects of uneasiness. Among these, not the least, was Reginald Dalton, whose unpropitious state of mind had by no means escaped attention in this, any more than in other quarters. Mr. Chisney entered warmly into the old gentleman's concern—he praised Reginald, and praised him zealously—he bore testimony to the excellence of his dispositions, and the quickness of his talents—he commended the delicacy of feeling, manifested in his recent retrenchment of expense — but at the same time hinted, how excessively absurd his previous conduct in that way had been—shook his head very sagaciously, in alluding to the ridiculous ideas which some young men were apt to entertain of their own consequence, and the silly vanity which many of them betrayed, in imitating a style of life which could only be adopted with propriety by those born in another sphere of society—and concluded with expressing his hope, that, in spite of the temptations to which young men of unequal spirits and eager fancy are so peculiarly exposed, his dear friend Dalton would have resolution enough to persevere in the laudable courses he seemed of late to have followed.— These remarks were interspersed with sundry little hints about the hardship the Daltons had sustained, in the total transference (for such it might now be considered) of the family estates into the hands of another race—the poverty of the Vicar's living—and how much more desirable it was than probable, that a young man, with so few natural connections as Reginald, should be soon and decently provided for in the Church of England—a Church in which, however high might be its merits as to other things, even the highest talents, he was sorry to observe, did not always command that attention which was paid to them in some other establishments, and more especially, if he might trust the imperfect information he had been able to receive, in that of the Church of Rome.

These observations, dropping, to all appearance, half-involuntarily from a person who had been introduced to Mr. Keith's acquaintance by Reginald himself, and of whose merits, moral and intellectual, Reginald's own report had inspired him with a high opinion, could not be listened to with indifference, or meditated upon afterwards without very considerable uneasiness. Nothing could shake the sincere and warm affection which the old man had conceived for Reginald Dalton ; yet it must not be concealed, that such hints and insinuations, so artfully administered, and in themselves, for the most part, carrying so fair and reasonable an aspect, produced

no trivial effects. The worthy old man, in a word, often felt disposed to curse the rashness with which he himself had behaved at Godstow, and to nourish a strong wish that he had it in his power, even now, to break off that intercourse between the young man and his ward, to which he had hitherto, he feared, afforded by far too much countenance. Nor did Reginald, whom the feeling and irritation of his poverty rendered abundantly quick-sighted and sensitive, fail to take notice, in due time, of the air of reserve which these feelings could not but communicate to the countenance and conversation of his old friend. Nor did this, it may easily be imagined, at all tend either to soothe his internal troubles, or to invest him with a more philosophic control over his deportment.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

REGINALD BECOMES A SIZAR.

REGINALD'S cup of distress, swelled by the various mingling elements to which we have already alluded, at last approached the moment when a single drop more was to be enough to make its bitterness overflow.

He rose one morning with something of an angry recollection of Mr. Keith's behaviour towards him the preceding evening—with a reproachful consciousness, still more painful to him, that he himself had looked and spoken upon that occasion in a way that must have wounded the gentle heart of Ellen Hesketh—with the knowledge that that very day was to terminate his engagement with the bookseller—with a hot brow, and a bosom heavy to weariness. One of those familiar sulky faces, which had haunted him in his troubled dreams, failed not, in due time, to present itself before him in the flesh. He locked his door in utter desperation, and sat down to indulge in cold and miserable broodings over all his calamity.

After doing so for some time, he roused himself to finish the last sheet of his labours, which had been left lying unopened for two or three days upon his table, from a sort of sickly reluctance to see the end of it. Having done this, Reginald at last, after a struggle of which we shall spare the description, wrote a letter to his father, in which he detailed his sufferings, and his necessities, and his fears; and then, eager to have done with a thing that had cost him so much torture, away he went to the post-office, to put his letter out of his sight and his reach.

He flung it in the moment he had come to the place, and turned to retrace his steps homeward in a mood of fixed, determined, and savage gloom. In going to his College, however, he had to pass the shop of the bookseller with whom he had had his dealings, and he stepped into it for a moment to deliver the last fragment of his task. He asked for his friend, and was invited to sit down for a few minutes, as he was not yet come from his dwelling-house.

Reginald accordingly was amusing, or seeming to amuse, himself with looking over some new publications that were scattered about this Temple of the Muses, when his attention was called by one of the shop-boys to a pile of books which they had been busy in arranging upon the floor; a new acquisition, as the lad said, and comprehending some articles of great rarity, which might probably interest Mr. Dalton.

"Boy," said Reginald, after a moment's pause, "where did your master get this book? I know this book well, sir. How—when—I demand—answer me—when—how was this obtained?"

"Indeed, I can't tell, sir.—Ned, I say—knowey where them old books come from, Neddy?"

"And here, sir—here's another book that I know — that I have known all my life. And here, as I live, here's another — and another! There's been theft, sir, or robbery here. Do you see the arms are effaced? Look here, sir, why there's a whole library!"

The bookseller himself, who happened to enter the shop just at that moment, came up with a smiling face to the place where Reginald was standing, and having overheard enough to perceive that he was making inquiry about these newly-arrived books, took upon himself the trouble of satisfying him. "O, Mr. Dalton—your servant, Mr. Dalton; and so you're looking over them there books—they're not arranged yet, sir, nor catalogued, nor even marked; but, on the whole, I think that you will find some valuable editions—a very fine set of 'Elzevirs,' Mr. Dalton. And do but look at this little 'Aldus' here—never saw a more perfect jewel. And here again, sir, here are also all the Dutch folios—the 'Dionysius'—do but observe it, sir—what a margin—what binding—the original vellum, sir—no paltry new gilding here, Mr. Dalton. But you won't look at the 'Dionysius,' I think, sir?"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. ——, but I believe I spoke rather hastily ere you came in. I thought I had seen that book, and some of the others, before. May I ask how they happened to come into your hands?"

"Ah! you're north-country, I believe, Mr. Dalton? I dare say you may have seen some of them there books before—they came from Manchester, sir. Did you ever chance to look into old Pococke's in that town, sir? A queer old fellow is Pococke, Mr. Dalton, but a knowing one in his way, sir—a sharp eye at an auction, sir. Many very extraordinary articles have found their way into Master Pococke's, that I shall say for him. I think he said something in his letter.—Fetch Mr. Pococke's letter of the 9th, Ned.—Ay,

here it is. Here's what Pococke says,—'The library of a respectable clergyman in Westmoreland, warranted genuine—all in best order—particularly rich in Dutch classics—large paper, uncut Stephanus, Greek—ditto, ditto, Latin.' That's all he says about the collection, however. Upon my word, Mr. Dalton, I have just given him his own terms, and slumped the affair."

But Reginald had heard quite enough, long before this man came to the end of his dissertation. He cast a hasty glance over the books, with every one of which he had been acquainted since his earliest days; and bowing abruptly, was about to quit the shop, lest his agony should betray itself. The bookseller, who observed something of his agitation, attributed it to his being uneasy, which indeed he well knew him to be, on account of the termination of the labour in which he had been employed. He called him aside, and put into his hands the small sum that was still due on that score, and dismissed him with some coarse, but kindly-meant hints, "that perhaps after all, under certain circumstances, if certain things, as it were, should turn out so and so, it might not be very long until something of a certain sort might offer."

The moment Reginald was disengaged from this scene, he walked, or rather ran, back to the post-office. He entered the place breathless, and had some difficulty in making the people understand his business. However, after a little delay, he succeeded in getting them to open their receptacles, and surrender the letter which he had put in for the Vicar of Lannwell.

He did not commit it to his pocket—no, not even for a moment. The instant he was out of the office, he bit and tore it into an hundred fragments, and tossed them in a bunch into the kennel. "So far well," he said to himself, eyeing them as they floated away from him on that inky stream—"so far at least it is well. I have at least robbed my last." He stood for an instant gazing after them, and stamped with his foot upon the pavement, in a sort of savage exultation, as the last bemudded tatter of them sunk from his view. He then hastily recollected and recovered himself, and banishing as well as he could all symptoms of agitation from his exterior, proceeded at a firm and deliberate pace to his College—but not his chambers.

The truth was, that for some two or three days past, an idea, for which the reader must be quite unprepared, had been floating about in Reginald's thoughts. It was an idea which, had any other person suggested it to him but a week or two before, must have ensured to that person the best blow or kick Reginald could have complimented him withal; nevertheless, it was, as has been said, an idea with which, during several days, this once proud and haughty spirit had, of its own motion, been making, or endeavouring to make, itself familiar.

The plain state of the case was just this.—Reginald Dalton found that things were come to such a crisis, that it was absolutely necessary for him either to leave Oxford altogether, or to fall upon some means of permanently diminishing the unavoidable expenses of his accidental residence, in such a way as to admit of his applying *all*, or almost all his allowance from the Vicar, to the acquittal of his remaining debts. To leave Oxford! This could not be, without tearing himself at the most critical of all possible conjunctures from the mistress of his soul—and what, to do him justice, he considered scarcely less than that, without upturning all his father's schemes as to his future life, thereby destroying, utterly destroying (he had but too much reason to think) the last visions of hope and comfort that still hovered about that best of men, and consoled him for all the evils with which, in consequence chiefly of the very purity and unsuspiciousness of his own nature, he had become entangled.

It was in the midst of the harrowing meditations to which this state of affairs had given rise, that Reginald Dalton, while standing the other day by himself in the porch of his College, had happened to observe the porter in the act of affixing a placard to the centre of the gate. He drew near and read a notification, which had been renewed from time to time during more than a year past, but to which hitherto he had never paid any attention beyond that of a passing glance. It was in these words—words, the like of which are, or have been, familiar to all Oxonian eyes.

"*Quisquis munus Studiosi Servientis in Collegio * * * ensi hodie vacuum suscipere exoptat domus Præfectum absque morâ adeat. —Datum sub sigillo,*" &c. &c.

"Indeed, sir," said the porter, seeing that Mr. Dalton was reading the inscription—"Indeed, sir, I think as how they might give over sticking up them here programs; there's ne'er a one, now-a-days, looks a'ter them things—Od's heart, it was not so once, howe'er, Mr. Dalton."

Reginald was quite aware of the nature of the situation, thus in vain offered to any one that should covet it. The thought of *thus* relieving himself from his troubles did cross his mind. Pride instantly shook it away again—again, however, it had returned, to be again rejected.

But now it returned under a very different light, and was welcomed. The young man's heart was soreness, to the kernel—he had beggared his father—he had reduced him to the necessity, for well he knew that must indeed have been the last necessity, of parting with his books—his friends—his only friends—his only companions—his oldest and dearest resources—his pleasure—his pride—his only luxury. He felt this, and he thirsted for penance—he

opened his arms to humiliation. His mind was not in a condition to admit of serious deliberate reflection upon all the bearings and consequences of the step he meditated ; but in the midst of trouble, remorse, and agony, he felt that no sacrifice could now be too great for him—no pain too severe—no humiliation too lowly. He felt this, his eye rested once more as he passed the threshold of * * *, upon the official document above transcribed; and, eager to put further shrinking out of his own power, he walked straight along the cloisters to the Provost's residence.

Before attending him thither, however, it may be proper, for the sake of those who are not personally acquainted with the institutions of the English Universities, to say a single word, by way of explanation. Such of my readers, then, as are not in this situation, must know that, in the original constitution of almost every College in Oxford and Cambridge, provision was made for the reception and free maintenance of a certain number of students, too poor to be able to support themselves during an academical residence. These youths had, in former times, various designations, such as "*Tabardarii, Batellarii,*" &c. They wore a dress distinguished by its total want of ornament from the other academical costumes. They performed certain semi-menial offices in the hall and the chapel ; and, excepting these particulars, they were treated and educated exactly in the same style with the independent students of the house in which they resided. In process of time, the *Sizars* of Cambridge, retaining the emoluments attached to these situations by the original founders, have, I believe, come, through a variety of causes, to be considered as in no-wise degraded below the rank of other students ; at least, if we may put implicit faith in some statements in 'Kirke White's Life and Letters,' they are now almost always the sons of gentlemen, and sometimes combine every vain extravagance of expenditure with a dress that used to be the mark of humble and virtuous poverty. No such broad and distinct change has taken place in the sister University. The more disagreeable and degrading offices formerly exacted, have indeed been dispensed with ; that effect modern feelings gradually produced ; but still there remains enough, and more than enough, to mark the Oxonian *Servitor* as a being of an inferior grade ; and, I believe, very few instances have occurred of that plain gown and tuftless cap being worn there by any one, who could possibly avoid their felt and acknowledged humiliation.

When a stranger dines in one of these stately halls, and observes a poor young man sitting, or perhaps (for such is still the rule in some houses) standing by himself, visibly separated by the peculiarities of his dress and situation from all the rest of his fellow-students, nothing is more natural than that he should feel and express his regret that a spectacle so painful should be suffered to exist in such days as ours. In general, however, the person, so thinking and speaking, might be reminded, that the youth whom he is commiserating, being in all probability the son of some hard-working artificer, or, which is perhaps still more frequently the case, of some nobleman's butler or coachman, does not in reality entertain any very painful feelings as to the place he holds—that, at all events, there is no obligation on him to hold it one hour longer than he likes—and that, after all, the advantages of receiving the best education which any English peer can give his son, without incurring one shilling of expense, is a thing which an ambitious scholar, born in any of the humbler walks of society, may very fairly consider as far overbalancing a few less agreeable matters connected with it. But the best and completest answer is, "Look over the 'Athenæ Oxonienses' —look over the records of this University, and the history, above all, of the Church of England." One cannot turn three leaves in the ponderous folios of the inimitable old 'Anthony-a-Wood,'* without finding the life of some great worthy of our country, commencing with the statement of his having been "a poor serving-child, or tabarder," in some college or hall of this University. It was in that humble gown that Wolsey himself began the career which ended in his Roman purple. But it is quite needless to detain the reader with the long list of illustrious and venerable names, which, if he have any curiosity as to the matter, he may easily make out for himself. Let it suffice to state, what must be well known to almost every churchman, that, even within our own time, the Bench of England has been ascended and adorned by one Archbishop, and more than one Bishop, whose early years had been spent in these humble situations, and who, but for the bounty that created such provisions, in days which we are too fond of calling dark and barbarous, must have, in all probability, ended their lives in the same obscure condition in which it was their fortune to be born, and from which it was their honour to rise.

To come nearer home, Dr. Ainsworth himself, the present Provost of * * * College, had in his youth belonged to this very class of students. For his gradual ascent from thence, he had perhaps reason to thank rather the display of shrewd talents for worldly business, and the opportunity of making himself useful in certain political elections, than any very distinguished attainments in literature or theology—but, however all that might be, he was now at the head of the society, his

* One of the most amusing, as well as instructive, books in the English language, and recently edited, in a masterly manner, by Mr. Bliss of St. John's College.

first connection with which had been of that lowly order; and it is not less certain, that he was, in every circumstance of aspect and demeanour, one of the lordliest personages who had ever filled the chair. Perhaps Reginald's knowledge of this dignitary's own early history might have had some effect upon the young man's mind, in regard to the determination which he had embraced. At all events, it is far from improbable, that this knowledge made him feel less painful embarrassment, than he might otherwise have done, in the prospect of personally communicating to him that determination.

Reginald found THE HEAD in the act of rising from a solitary luncheon of pork cutlets, the savoury effluvia of which was, indeed, sufficiently perceptible long before he entered his apartment. He received our young friend with an air of dignified suavity—invited him to taste his Madeira — the only wine, he observed with a serious look, that Dr. Wall would suffer him to touch now-a-days—and then establishing himself in his accustomed *fauteuil*, in an attitude at once easy and commanding, he begged to be informed what business had procured him this unexpected honour from Mr. Dalton.

Reginald was in no mood for preamble or circumlocution—he told his story at once, so abruptly and concisely indeed, that the great man did not just at first appear to comprehend its drift. The youth repeated it over again in the same words. Dr. Ainsworth eyed him keenly for a moment, then knit his brows, looked downwards, and stroked his band—a slight reinforcement at the same time adding itself to the natural or acquired rubicundity of his large and massive visage.

After the pause of an instant, his countenance recovered all the serene and benignant solemnity of its usual aspect. "Young gentleman," he said, "I take it for granted you have not come on this errand without perfect deliberation; and really, sitting here as I do, I for one cannot but say, that, viewing all the circumstances of the case, sir, which, to be sure, you and your friends must have done better than I can be supposed to do, why, really, Mr. Dalton, it is impossible for me to say that I do not approve of what is proposed."

"I am heartily glad, sir," said Reginald, very hurriedly—"I am extremely glad to hear what you say."

"Yes, indeed," the dignitary resumed, "the more I consider the matter, the more judicious does it seem to me your plan is. It would, indeed, be a thousand pities that you should quit the University—very good report of you from the Sub-dean—very flattering reports indeed—have not seen Barton of late—but that's of no consequence—poor man, he's always too busy to think of these little matters—heard you myself at the collections t'other day—construed very prettily, sir—very prettily indeed — exceedingly prettily, Mr. Dalton—quitting the University, without degree, always a step much to be deprecated—too common of late, but bad, Mr. Dalton, bad — and, after all, there is but little of disagreeable in the situation — Cambridge Sizars, in fact, the same thing, and nobody hesitates to put on the Sizar's gown there—nobody. Here, many of the most respectable men—many of the first men in Oxford, I may say, have done the same thing. Manners make the man, as old Wykham says. One must crack the nut for the kernel—emolument not inconsiderable—no bar to a fellowship, Mr. Dalton, none in the world—quite the contrary. You know, I myself—and there's Mr. Rodds—highly respectable man Rodds—indolent, else might rise high. Upon the whole, Mr. Dalton, I approve of the thing—think your resolution highly to your honour—shall make it our study, sir, to soften everything. You may depend upon it, we will, sir—we will indeed. Will you oblige me so far as to hand me the Buttery-book? There, ay, that's it with the clasps—and the inkstand, if you please.—Beg your pardon, Mr. Dalton—old limbs stiff, you know, my young friend — ay, here's the place — here, Mr. Dalton, you have nothing to do but sign your name—here, below mine. Ay, that will do—now the whole affair is over—the Sub-dean will send for you in the course of the day—better not come into the hall for a day or two, perhaps, until the talk is over. Young people will talk—never mind their talk, Dalton — never mind it, Dalton — not worth a straw the whole of it, my dear fellow."

The courteous manner in which, upon this painful occasion, he had been received and dismissed by the reverend Provost, certainly excited a feeling of gratitude in Reginald's mind; and that feeling was in nowise diminished, when he had had time to reflect over all that had passed in the solitude of his own chamber. To say truth, however, had the young man been able to trace all this kindly behaviour to its right source, he might not improbably have viewed the matter in somewhat a different light. The fact was, that, just at that time, this dignitary's son, a practitioner of rising reputation at the Chancery-bar, was paying his addresses to the only daughter of an old East Indian director, who, though his own fortune had been entirely acquired in commerce, was pleased, in virtue of a Welsh pedigree, to consider himself entitled to nothing less than a patrician alliance; and who, accordingly, had testified no great approbation of Mr. Ainsworth's suit, alleging, among other reasons, the extremely humble origin of that gentleman's family, of which he considered the well-known fact of the old Doctor's having been a servitor in an Oxford College, as of itself furnishing the most incontrovertible evidence. The Provost, from whom this circumstance had not been concealed, conceived

a sudden idea, the moment young Dalton told him his errand, that the worthy director might be induced to lessen the rigour of his prejudices, on being made to understand, that the situation, of which he had formed so degraded a notion, *was* occasionally held by people of the most blameless descent; and already enjoyed in his own mind the effect which might be produced by a well-timed mention of Mr. Dalton, a puff of his Lancashire lineage (to the loftiness of which Dr. Ainsworth was no stranger), and a statement of *his* wearing, at that very moment, the same tuftless trenchercap, which had in former days shaded the dignitary's own physiognomy —but this *par parenthese.*

Though gratitude, and some other gentle enough emotions, were mingled in the troubled breast of our young man, many hot and tempestuous thoughts boiled there along with them. Now, he would sit with his hand upon his brow, sunk in languor, wearied of himself, and of the world; and now, starting suddenly from the attitude and the feebleness of dejection, he would pace about his room with an eye of flame, and a brow knit as into furrows of iron. His cap was lying on the table; his eye no sooner chanced to rest upon it, than he seized it and hurled it against the wall. It met him again in his walk; he kicked it furiously from him; he lifted it up the next moment, took out his knife, and cut off the silk tuft; and then seeing that he had but half defaced the symbol of his forfeited rank, he began to gnaw the threads out with his teeth by their roots. He flung them handful by handful into the fire, and watched their disappearance with the stern smile, which no man ever smiles but in solitude.

He had just completed this work of destruction, when a knock sounded at his door. Who or what it might be, he cared not—he flung the door open, and Frederick Chisney entered, attended by a couple of small sleek cockers.

This gentleman did not seem to remark anything of the agitation, which Reginald in vain strove to conceal. A quantity of books and papers were lying in confusion on the table, and he began to apologise for disturbing Mr. Dalton in his studies.

"Nay, nay," said Reginald, "I was not busy—not in the least."

"Well, well, I'm not going to trouble you with a long visit, at all events. I'll tell you my errand in a moment. It is only to say, that I happen to be run quite short, and if you chance to be in cash, I wish you could give me the trifle you borrowed from me two months ago."

"A thousand pardons," said Reginald—"You shall have the money this instant." With this Reginald opened his desk and paid him. It was exactly the sum which he had received from his bookseller that morning—in other words, it was all the money he was at the moment master of. However, in spite of all his art, there had been some symptoms of coldness of late about Chisney, and the mode of his present address was such, that Reginald could not endure the idea of remaining an instant longer in his debt.

"God bless my soul," said Chisney, pocketing the bank-notes, "what a queer mad fellow you are, Dalton! In the name of wonder, what have you been doing with your trencher?"

Reginald took up the cap, and tossed it aside. He paused for a moment, and then said, in a voice of perfect calmness, "You see what my follies have brought me to, Chisney; I have no longer any right to wear my cap, otherwise than as you see it."

"Why, what the devil! what is your meaning?"

"The meaning is, sir, that I have all but ruined my father—that I never knew, until to-day, the extent to which I had injured him —that I am resolved to injure him no farther —that I have entered myself as a servitor."

"A servitor!—pooh, pooh! you're joking now.—Why, as I live, you are serious. Upon my word, you've been very hasty, however—but you are displeased, Dalton.—Well, it's your own affair—you'll change your mind before to-morrow perhaps.—But stop, what am I thinking of? Perhaps it may be inconvenient for you just now to part with—allow me to return this, Dalton.'"

"No, not for the world, sir. Keep your purse in your pocket."

"Nay, if you take things so, I have no more to say. Good-morrow to you, Dalton. I shall be happy to see you at Christ-Church—don't suppose that I shall sport my——Nay, nay, if this is the way of it, sir, I wish you once more a very good morning.—Come, Juno—Spot, you b——."

"Good morning, sir," said Reginald, rising and bowing. Chisney returned a very formal bow, and then walked out of the apartment, whistling his dogs to his heel.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FAREWELL.

REGINALD, as the reader may easily suppose, did not obey the summons of the dinner-bell this day, neither did he send for anything to his room—his heart was sick, and he loathed the idea of food. He was so foolish, however, as to draw a bottle of wine, one of the few that remained in his possession, and to swallow several bumpers, one after the other, as rapidly as he could pour them down his throat.

He waited until about five o'clock, and then sallied out to encounter an interview, which he well knew must be a very painful one, with Ellen Hesketh and Mr. Keith. Of Ellen's love, of the purity, constancy, and passionate

tenderness of her attachment, he could not, even in this jaundiced and bitter state of his mind, bring himself to entertain any doubt. But we have already seen, that he had some reason to suspect Mr. Keith of having, in some measure, changed his views or his opinions concerning him, and that this coldness, from whatever cause it might have originated, had been particularly perceptible but the evening before—What, under these circumstances, might be the effect produced on the old Priest by the communication which he conceived it his duty to lose no further time in making, this the event only could show ; but Reginald was in a fit mood for making the gloomiest guesses in regard to that, as well as most other matters. He approached St. Clements with nerves braced, as he thought, for the worst that could happen, and touched the knocker of Mr. Keith's door with a firm and rapid hand.

He was admitted by the only domestic of the house, an elderly woman, who had once been a great friend of Reginald's, but who had recently (perhaps in consequence of comparing his behaviour, in a certain particular, with the liberality of Mr. Chisney's douceurs) regarded him with somewhat less kindness of aspect. She told him, the moment he passed the threshold, that her master had given orders to show him up, in case he called, to his bed-chamber. He followed her up-stairs, and was forthwith admitted.

The old man was sitting in his elbow-chair, close by a large fire. He was looking worse than Reginald had seen him all the winter, and muffled up, as if he had been preparing for a Russian journey, in a huge cloak, lined all through with fur. He received Reginald courteously, but drily, answered in monosyllables his inquiries about his health, and pointed to the opposite chair, but saved himself the trouble of saying, "sit down."

"Mr. Keith," said Reginald, "I have come on purpose——"

"I know what has brought you, Mr. Dalton ; your friend Chisney was here half an hour ago, he told me the whole story. You may spare yourself the pain of repeating it."

"Mr. Keith, I confess that I am a little hurt with your way of——"

"My way of what, Mr. Dalton? Really, really, my young friend, you must just expect that I am to have, at these years, my own views of things ; truly, this is the least I have to ask of you."

"Most certainly, sir, I should be the last person——"

"I am heartily glad to hear you say so, Mr. Dalton ; and now, since you are taking matters like a young man of sense, I really must just take the present opportunity, Mr. Dalton, to say a single word or two, rather more seriously than you may perhaps have looked for. Yes, young gentleman, it is my duty, and I feel it to be so. There has been a great deal of very foolish work going on here, sir—very foolish work indeed, young man. I cannot say anything — I have no right nor title, no, nor wish neither, to have anything to do about your affairs further than as they are connected with mine—with what I reckon as mine ; and really, upon my word, I am willing to give you credit for what you have been doing to-day. I presume it's been with your friends' knowledge, and by their advice ; and, at any rate, I honour anything that looks like a manly sense of repentance. I do honour *that*, sir. But now listen calmly to me, Mr. Dalton ; put yourself in my place, and say what you would do. I leave it quite to your own judgment—I ask no better, sir. Just observe what sort of prospects all this leaves—just say, if you can, that I ought, in common discretion, as a guardian, a parent I may say, to allow things to go on as they have been doing. Just lay your hand on your heart, and speak out. I refer it to your own sense of decency and propriety—Can I, I ask, be justifiable—can I be doing my duty in the trust I bear, if I countenance, under present circumstances, your continuing to visit here on the sort of footing you have been?"

"Mr. Keith, I must crave leave to answer by a question—Have I ever concealed any part of my circumstances from you? Can you charge me with having practised any sort of disguise at any period of our acquaintance?"

"No, no, not at all, that's not my meaning —I have nothing of the sort to allege ; and, let me add, if I had, I should not perhaps have taken just this way ; but no matter, to the point. I am indeed" (here the Priest sunk his voice), "I am indeed sincerely, most sincerely distressed for you. I am distressed for your father, sir—I am very heartily grieved for him. This last step, sir, shows more fully what is the real state of your family affairs, than anything could have done. Depend on't, I feel very deeply ; but, my good young friend, you are very young, and Ellen is a very, very young creature. I know it will be a sore heart to you both ; but really I must speak my mind, for her sake, for yours, for all our sakes, and for your father's sake as much as anything else, Mr. Dalton ; and I must just say, very distinctly, that I have been casting everything in my mind, and that I cannot consent to any further intercourse, at least for some time. I know I am paining you, man, and I am very sorry for that ; but, to make a long tale short, 'tis seen folly and absurdity all this just now, and you must really just bear wi't like a man, and settle yourself to your studies. Na, na, the shortest follies are the best—them that cannot rin must walk—we must ride the water as we find it. You shall carry with you my heartiest, kindest, good wishes, and perhaps we may meet, ere very lang be, under different circumstances."

"Sir, I perfectly understand you. You mean to forbid me your house, Mr. Keith?"

"You put things strongly, young man; but, in friendship to yoursell, I think it's the only course that's left for us."

"And Ellen—Have you informed her of this?"

"Miss Hesketh is my ward, sir. I have dropped several hints — I have acted as I deemed it my duty."

"And she knows what you have been saying?"

"Not exactly, perhaps. I shall lose no time in informing her of my views."

"Where is she, sir? I may speak with her, I suppose—you will not refuse *that?*"

"Why, I believe, my young man, it would be meikle better for a' concerned, if I *did* refuse that; but, however, I wish to do all as gently as may be. God knows, 'tis only the thought of your own goods. Well, you had better step down-stairs and ask for her; but mind this, there's to be no promises, no vows."

"No, no, sir—you may depend on it there shall be no vows now. Farewell, then, Mr. Keith. I have to return my acknowledgments, sir, for all the hospitality I have met with under your roof—Farewell, sir."

"God bless you, sir; I hope—I hope you will do well. You have my heartiest good wishes, and prayers too, if you think them worth the having. God bless you." The old man put forth his hand. Reginald gave his with much coldness and restraint. The Priest shook it, passive as it was, very fervently, and Reginald retired.

"You will find Miss Hesketh in the parlour. She went out to the Chapel a little while since, but I heard her come in again; and now, remember, be short, be brief—such things can never be done too briefly."

The young man answered this with a very haughty glance, and descended the staircase with slow and heavy footsteps. He threw open the parlour door, but there was no one there—he rung the bell violently, and asked the servant, where was Miss Hesketh.

"Miss Hesketh is engaged," said the woman, drawing herself up.

"Where—with whom? I must see Miss Hesketh."

"Miss Hesketh is not at home just now, sir."

"Not at home?—Impossible. I shall wait, however, till she comes."

"Lord! sir, you speak very strangely, if I may be bold.—But, if you *will* know it, Miss Hesketh is in the garden."

"Alone?"

"A gentleman went with her."

"Enough—enough."

Reginald walked out of the house and across the green. When he had got about half-way to the Chapel, he heard a shriek—a female shriek—it came from the Chapel. It was Ellen's voice—he rushed to the door—it was fastened. He shook it half off its hinges with one grasp, then put his foot to the lock, and kicked it open. He saw Ellen—(she had twined her arms round the pillar)—her face deadly pale, her eyes open and aghast—and again she screamed. Close beside stood Chisney, his countenance was like fire, his dress disordered—he stamped with his foot, and leapt forward—Reginald rushed to meet him.—"Villain! Scoundrel! Dastard!" and instantly they grappled. Reginald sprung like a tiger at his throat, half-strangled him with his grip, and dealing a furious blow at the same moment against the stomach, saw him stretched upon the marble, and trampled his breast with his heel.

Ellen still clung to the pillar with the same convulsive closeness. He put his arms around her—she sunk upon his bosom, trembling, feeble as a child. He lifted her in his arms, and ran out of the Chapel. She had fainted ere he passed its threshold. He knelt beside the well, and dashed water on her brow and bosom, and saw her open her heavy eyelids, and close them again. Again he flung a handful of water on her face, and shouted for help. The old woman came out—Mr. Keith flung open his window—the next instant the old man was at his side.

"Young man, you see what you have done. My poor girl—Ellen, my darling! I am here—I am here!"

Ellen opened her eyes, turned them wildly first on Reginald, and then towards the Chapel, and dropped her head on the Priest's bosom. The Priest cast his eyes in the same direction. Mr. Chisney was standing by the Chapel door, his arms folded on his breast. The old man whispered into Ellen's ear, "Who? who is it? What has happened? Who is it that has dared——?"

"Look yonder, sir," said Reginald.

At that moment Chisney bounded across an angle of the green, and sprang to the top of the wall. He stood there long enough to say, in an audible whisper, "Mr. Dalton, take this," and to fling a card into the enclosure; and then he leaped into the next field, and was lost to their view.

Reginald obeyed the impulse of the moment, and pursued. He also leaped the wall, and remained for some time out of view. After a few minutes, however, he again made his appearance at the front-door of the house. He knocked there, and was, after a little pause, admitted by Mr. Keith himself, who had a huge cudgel in his hand.

"Come in, come in, Mr. Dalton. Come your ways in to the house. Have you seen him? Have you seen the scound——?"

"I have."

"May eternal confusion——"

"Hem——"

"Heaven's curse of curses, sir! Where has he gone? Where shall I find him?"

"Oh no, sir, I believe you need not give yourself any trouble."

"Trouble, sir? I wonder what you take me for—Trouble, indeed!"

"I only wish to know that Miss Hesketh is recovered. I have no desire to trouble *you*, sir."

"Nay, nay, my young man, you must not take it this gait *now*. I believe—I fear—I greatly fear—I comprehend the truth of the case."

"'Tis no great matter, sir. How is Miss Hesketh?"

"Better, O better. She'll be herself by and by. I have much that I would fain say to you, Mr. Dalton. I beg you to come in. Heaven's mercy! What can I do?"

"Can I see Miss Hesketh?"

"Nay, nay, you're too hasty. I'm sure you will allow it would be better not just now."

"I will call again in the evening, then."

"Oh, my young man, your looks are very distressing to me. Will ye not rest ye here for a little till ye're calmed, till we're all calmed? We must really have some talk."

"*That* may keep cold for a few hours, I presume," said Reginald. "I shall be here, let me see, exactly at eight—you may expect me at eight. If I don't come I shall write to you."

"Very well, you'll take your own way. Oh! Mr. Dalton, you're not doing me justice—you're not putting yourself in my place—you're thinking quite wrongly. I feel, I assure you, as God's my witness, I feel more than you will give me credit for. Do stay here, and cool yourself."

"I can't, sir, if I would. I have some business in College—I can't stay at present."

"Then you'll be sure to come at eight," said the Priest, seizing and squeezing his hand.

"At eight?" said Reginald.

"Yes, at eight. Did not you say you would come at eight?"

"Ay, true—I did say so. I shall, if possible, attend you at eight."

"And you'll stay to your supper, Mr. Dalton? Now, promise me, like a good lad. Nay, nay, man, you don't know me—you're not behaving like yourself."

"Farewell, till eight," said Reginald, turning abruptly from the Priest. The old man stood in his door-way, looking after him. Perhaps he might have been doing so for more than a couple of minutes, when he turned round again and retraced his steps——

"What is it, Mr. Dalton—I pray you, what is the matter?—Stop, nay, stop, young man, what is your purpose?"

"But for a moment—one single moment," said Reginald, and he rushed past the old man into the parlour.

Ellen was lying on the sofa, pale as death, but the blood rushed into her face when she saw him. The old Priest was close behind him, but he took no notice of him; and before he could say a word, he had taken hold of Ellen's hand, pressed that to his lips, and then imprinted a single burning and solemn kiss upon her cheek.

"Young man," said the Priest, pulling him back, "What behaviour is this? You do wrong, wrong—very wrong."

Reginald turned to him, and with a cheek and an eye full of fire—"I do right, sir," he said—"I do nothing but what is right, and *my* right. Once more, dearest Ellen,"—he proceeded, bending over her again—"once more—and now farewell."

With that he bowed to the astonished Priest, and, without a word more, walked from the room and from the house.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE DUEL.

He had scarcely reached his own room, and flung himself, exhausted, into a chair, ere he received a visit from a young gentleman of Christ-Church, who intimated that he had come for the purpose of arranging the particulars of that meeting, which (in the course of the brief interview which had taken place between Chisney and Reginald in the field adjoining to Mr. Keith's garden) it had already been agreed, must not be deferred beyond the same evening.

Reginald desired his visitor to sit down for a few moments, and went in quest of Stukeley, whom, as a Bachelor of Arts, and as a person that could have no idea of taking orders, he thought he might, with least hazard of any serious inconvenience, request to act as his friend upon this occasion. Stukeley, abruptly summoned from a party in the common room, where Reginald had formed, as might have been expected, the chief topic of conversation, was at first inclined not to have anything to do with an affair which he not unnaturally imagined must have arisen out of some rash proceeding of this young man's; whose mind, he did not doubt, must be, after what had occurred that morning, in a very irritable and agitated state. Reginald, however, in the course of a short walk in the College Garden, convinced him thoroughly of the baseness which Chisney's conduct had exhibited. Stukeley's generous spirit failed not to suggest to him, that the refusal of his aid, after the step which Reginald had that day taken, and which the Head of the College had lost no time in announcing, might be interpreted in a way he could not bear to think of. The moment his mind was quite satisfied as to the justice of the quarrel, he accepted the proffered office, although not indeed without avowing the reluctance and aversion he felt towards being concerned in such an affair, between

two persons whom he had been accustomed to look upon as almost equally his friends. He therefore repaired, without delay, to Dalton's rooms, where he held a conversation of considerable length with the Christ-Church man, and then rejoined our hero in the garden, and communicated to him the result.

"I fear," he said, "there is no chance of my being able to serve you as a peace-maker. The blow, Dalton—But why say more of it? I see it must be so; and you have, no doubt, made up your mind as to the consequences."

"I have, my dear Stukeley. Alas! You know not how it pains me to think of what I am exposing you to."

"Me, my dear fellow — don't waste a thought on that. God bless you, I don't value Oxford a shilling. My feelings are for you and for——"

"Say no more, Stukeley. You agreed upon the old hour?"

"Yes—on the whole, perhaps, it was as well."

"Much better—and now we have just about an hour."

"Ay, and we must be busy. Do you go to your rooms, and look after your affairs there, for you know you can scarcely sleep here to-night. I shall have everything ready for you."

They shook hands, and Reginald repaired once more to his apartment in * * *. He felt satisfied, as he entered it, that he should never see it again as its master. He knew perfectly well, that if there be one offence for which the rules of academical discipline admit of no forgiveness, he was on the brink of committing it. He knew that he had virtually ceased to be a member of the University. He knew that his life, if he preserved it, was changed, changed in every colour. He knew that whatever might be the result, he was about to do what must give greater, a thousand times greater pain to his father, than all his previous errors put together. He knew that these, weighed against this one step, must be as a feather. He felt, however, that he *could* not do otherwise than he had done —than he was about to do. There was trouble, darkness, miserable darkness within; but there was burning ire too—indignation, and contempt, and steady scorn, and the hot thirst of blood; all these, strangely blended with the tender yearnings of a young and living love, and yet all shrouded and enveloped, more strangely still, in a profound feeling of weariness of life.

The young man arranged matters the best way he could in so short a time, with a view to his rooms being either thrown into other hands, or occupied by himself, under the only circumstances that could admit of his returning to them. He then wrote with great calmness, and at considerable length, to his father; and more hastily and passionately to Miss Hesketh. More than one tear dropped on one—perhaps on both—of these solemn letters. They contained his farewells to the only two human beings who, he could suppose, would weep inconsolable tears over his grave and his memory. He sealed them both, and wrapping them under one open cover, thrust the packet into his bosom.

He had just made an end of it when Stukeley came into his room, wrapped in a wide travelling cloak. He made Reginald put on a similar dress, and then they walked together through the town, avoiding the principal streets, and so straight on to the appointed scene, which was in one of the fields upon the Isis, a little way eastward from the bridge.

The twilight was already verging rapidly towards darkness ere they reached the spot. Mr. Chisney and his friend were there before them. Stukeley, upon coming to the ground, went forwards and drew Chisney's second aside for a moment. There was some whispering between them, but it lasted only for a few moments, Mr. Chisney turning his back upon the whole party while it continued. His second left Stukeley and approached him—he waved his hand, as if to forbid him from speaking, and after hearing what he did say (whatever that might be), he stamped impatiently, and muttered something that put an end to all colloquy.

When the ground was measured, and Reginald placed within so few paces of his antagonist, he could, in spite of the twilight, see that his cheek was burning.

"Chisney," said he, "you know that I am blameless."

"I know nothing, Mr. Dalton—no time for words here. Gentlemen, I suppose we are both ready."

The signal was given—both fired, and neither fell. On the very instant Chisney called for another pair of pistols, in a voice hoarse with passion—they were produced. Again they awaited—again they both obeyed the signal. Reginald's arm was touched just below the elbow—but almost ere he *felt* the blow, he was aware that his own ball had taken severer effect. He saw Chisney spring from the ground, and fall prostrate. There was a shouting and crying—some one leaped from behind a hedge—all was confusion—his eye became unsteady, and he could scarcely stagger a few paces forwards, ere he also fell.

Reginald had been stunned in this way, in consequence of the ball grazing the bone near the left elbow; but he recovered himself in a second or two, and found there was nothing to prevent Stukeley, and even himself, from endeavouring to be of use to Mr. Chisney, whom his second and surgeon had already placed upon a piece of wicker wattling, torn from the adjacent fence. From the whispers of the medical gentleman, and the ghastly appearance which the wounded man's countenance had already assumed, Reginald gathered

but too plainly, that there was every reason to expect the most fatal issue. However, there was no time for reflection; a handkerchief being knotted firmly round his arm, our youth lent his right hand to the common service; and in the course of a few minutes, the party were all on their way to Christ-Church.

It was by this time so dusky, that, by keeping to the meadow and the lane, they reached Canterbury-gate, without having collected any crowd about them; and Mr. Chisney was deposited in his own room, and stripped, and the surgeon had begun to probe his wound, which was in the right groin, ere either Reginald or Stukeley could command any part of their attention to themselves. Chisney, aroused from the stupor into which he had fallen by the application of the instruments, cast a hasty glance upon the group that hung round his bed, and the moment he recognised Reginald, waved with his hand, as if to bid him quit the place. The doctor at the same instant made a signal to the same effect, and whispered something into Stukeley's ear. Reginald was just advancing to say something to Chisney, when the rattle of the bull-dogs' batons was heard under the window; and Chisney's second, ere there was a single moment for consideration, drew both Stukeley and Dalton out of the apartment, and ran with them as quickly as possible towards the gate by which they had entered the College. When they came to the corner of Peckwater, however, they perceived that the door was shut, and that several persons were standing within it. It was evident that an alarm had been given, and they all three retreated for a moment within the shade of the nearest staircase, to consult what was to be done. It was clear, that everything must be attempted in order to avoid the confinement which must inevitably and instantly follow, in case their concern in the affair should have been known, and this, they were quite aware, could not be concealed at most for more than an hour or two. The Proctors were already, it seemed, within Christ-Church—the whole buildings would of course be searched without delay.

Frank Hall (this was the name of Chisney's friend), after musing for a single moment, said he believed there was still one chance remaining; and cautioning them to creep close behind him in the shade, led the way to a little wicket, not far from where they had been standing, upon one of the sides of the great quadrangle. He made a signal, which was, after a moment's pause, answered and obeyed from within, and the whole party found themselves within a very small paved court. It was a female who had opened the door—and there was no lack of whispers of surprise and rebuke, when she perceived that so many visitors had been admitted, in virtue of a summons that she had no doubt understood as announcing only one. Mr. Hall, however, found means to make the girl comprehend something of the necessities of the case. She hesitated for an instant—a kiss and a crown reinforced his arguments, and she led them into the house.

"The door is half open," whispered Hall—"I see the light of the candles—we can't pass without being discovered."

"Never fear," the girl whispered in reply; "master's sleeping, and mistress is sitting with her back towards us."

In passing the door, Reginald could not avoid throwing one glance into the apartment of the Canon. The purple old man was dozing with his feet on the fender, a huge night-cap on his head, and an enormous black cat asleep on his lap. The wife, daughter, niece, or cousin, a pimpled paragon, was sitting on the opposite side of the fire, nodding over a volume of 'Hannah More,' and a rummer of hot brandy and water—a pack of dirty cards lay half way between her and the Canon, and one of the tall unsnuffed candles was distilling a slow heavy stream of liquid tallow upon the oaken boards of a folio volume of 'Chrysostom.' They glided rapidly past, and were in a moment in the Canon's garden, among tall sighing poplars, and a wilderness of wet sheets, smocks, and surplices. By means of a stout old plum-tree, they successively reached the top of the wall; they dropped as rapidly into the little dark lane, and were instantly saluted with a whistle—a shout—and the rattling of batons from beside a postern-gate, some thirty paces off. They ran like madmen, and gained the end of the lane in safety; but Reginald had the misfortune, just in turning the corner, to stumble over an old woman and her basket, and though he recovered his feet in an instant, both Stukeley and Hall had vanished.

He got into Mertoun-lane, however, and, after running as far as the church, had the satisfaction to hear the bull-dogs turn up by Oriel. He did not slacken his pace, nevertheless, but continued to hold eastward as rapidly as his legs could carry him. Everything was perfectly quiet—not a creature in the lanes; and when he had reached the bridge, and found that nobody was stationed on it, he stopped to draw breath, concluding that he had for the present baffled all the diligence of his pursuers.

Yet, when he had had leisure to cool for a moment, what was the avail of all this? He was alone; the companions of his flight might have been taken; at all events, they were separated from him—he had but a few shillings in his pocket—he was every way unprovided for a journey—above all, he was quite ignorant of London, even of the road to London, and he was well aware, that it was only in the obscurity of the capital he could hope to escape notice even for a day or two. Why take the trouble to spend a night in the fields, with the certainty, for such he considered it, of being stopped and apprehended

in the first village he should come to in the morning? He was so well acquainted with the strictness of the police maintained in that district, both within and beyond the limits of the proctorial authority, and so sensible to the suspicions which his own appearance must excite (by the way, *inter alia*, he had lost his hat in dropping from the Canon's garden-wall), that, after casting about the whole affair in his mind for a single moment, he became pretty well convinced, that the best thing he could do, was to return directly and surrender himself.

One thing, however, he might try. He might run on as far as St. Clements, and see whether old Keith could give him anything of assistance, of concealment, or of advice. Even if he could not, he should still redeem the promise he had given—he should still see Ellen once more—he should at least avoid the additional misery of being thrown into confinement, in ignorance whether she had or had not recovered from the effects of the brutal incident of the afternoon.

Thus determined, Reginald advanced along the road, and had the satisfaction of reaching the Priest's door, without the smallest interruption. He did not venture, however, to make use of the knocker, but tapped lightly with his fingers upon one of the parlour-windows. But he had scarcely touched the glass, ere the door was opened with a violent jerk, and he found himself enclosed from behind in the arms of a certain public character, on whose appearance in that place he certainly had not calculated. This was no other than a certain well-known officer of the municipality of Oxford—a personage whose youth had been spent before the mast—but whose brawny manhood, and enormous laced-hat, had long been the terror of all ungown'd evil-doers within the purlieus of this classical city; while his delightful method of singing "The Maid of Lodi," had rendered him a mighty favourite among many classes of the academical residents. Reginald, who had often treated the old fellow with a can of ale, in return for his melodious exertions, thought his acquaintance might perhaps hear a little reason; so, being destitute of cash, he poured into his ear a most munificent supply of promises—but the virtue of the ancient tar was proof against any such temptations. He answered by thrusting his tongue in his cheek, and squirting out an enormous flood of tobacco-juice, croaked with a most hideous chuckle. "A joke's a joke, by G—, my master." He then applied a whistle to his lips, and sent forth a shrill note, which instantly brought three or four stout constables leaping over the Priest's garden-door; and Reginald, surrounded and grappled by the whole party, resigned himself to his fate.

Ellen Hesketh rushed out of the house, just as they were leading him down the steps from its door. He heard her scream, and rid himself by a desperate effort from the gripe of his attendants. He caught her in his arms, and pressed her to his beating breast—she folded herself round him—her white arms encircled him with wild and clinging energy—she sobbed out her love and her terror—she grew to him as if death could not divide them. But in a moment the old Priest was at their side; he whispered gently into Ellen's ear, and received her, slowly yielding, into his arms; he whispered something to Reginald too, and wrung the young man's hands with paternal fervour. Reginald (it had all occupied but an instant) recovered his self-possession, and turning with perfect composure to the officers, said, "Now I am ready—I will walk quietly along with you."

In the course of his progress up the High-street, he was surrendered by the city-officers into the hands of one of the Proctors, and forthwith conducted to the Castle, under the guidance of this academical magistrate, who treated him with every kind of politeness and sympathy, and did not leave him in his gloomy abode, until he had in person enjoined the jailor to do everything his rules permitted for the unfortunate young gentleman's comfort.

This injunction was, of course, not the less necessary, in consequence of Reginald's being designated in the Vice-Chancellor's warrant, by the style of his new and humble rank in the University. Even the Proctor's interference did not perhaps prevent this circumstance from having some influence; but however that might have been, the young man was lodged in a chamber, which to him appeared a most perfect picture of misery—a small place, with bare stone walls, very high up in that huge old tower which has frowned over Isis, I believe, ever since the days of Rufus.

The height of this place from the ground dispensed, however, with some of the worst features of a common dungeon—there were no bars upon the window, from which, the moon having now appeared above the horizon, Reginald might have entertained his eyes, if he had had a mind, with one of the finest prospects the magnificent architecture of Oxford had ever presented to him—the whole city, river, and tower, and tree, and spire, and minaret, lying stretched out below him as in a map. But, to say truth, our hero had no eyes for all this beauty. The variety of scenes through which, in the course of that one short day, he had passed, had left his mind in a state of the most intense excitation, and combining with the smart of the slight wound he had received, reduced him to the verge of phrenzy.

A surgeon waited upon him, and dressed his arm, ere he had been half an hour in the Castle. This gentleman also compelled him to swallow an opiate, which had some effect

in diminishing the disorder of his nerves, though sleep that night was entirely out of the question. The bodily fatigue and exhaustion under which he laboured were, it is true, so great, that, had he been surrounded with anything like silence, it is not improbable they might have triumphed over the tumultuous agitation of his thoughts. But all night long he was tormented into watchfulness by sounds of the most disgusting nature—for the assizes were near, and the felons, with whom the place was plentifully stocked, were taking advantage, as is their custom, of the absence of the turnkeys, to carry on nocturnal conversations with each other touching their various offences and expected fates, screaming and shouting through the various apertures which opened from their cells upon the stair-case and passages for the admission of air. The harsh croaking voices of these villains, the savage oaths and blasphemous imprecations with which their discourse was interlarded, and the shocking character of their themes—these, together with the ceaseless clanking of their irons, were more than enough to keep him sleepless. He listened with a new sense of horror to this language of base and brutal depravity—the half-triumphant recapitulations of crimes—the gallows jokes, the poor attempts to disguise the tremours of conscious and shrinking guilt. Between the acts of this hideous concert, dark enough were the meditations on which his own tossed spirit fed itself. When daylight broke upon the dungeon, it seemed to him as if it came to dash aside the blackness of one long terrible dream, in which every element of horror had been brooding over him—his sense of bodily pain, and all his confused remembrances of shame, and anger, and violence, and degradation, and scorn, and blood—all mixed up together in one inextricable chaos, with visions such as haunt the imagination of ruffians — the stalking phantoms of murdered men — the air-drawn dagger—and stripes, and chains, and gibbets.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

LOVE AND HONOUR.

At an early hour of the first day that our unfortunate spent in his prison, a portmanteau, containing clothes, and the like, was sent to him from his College, and along with this, a letter addressed to him in the handwriting of his father. Reginald, perhaps the very bitterest portion of whose reflections turned upon the Vicar, could not bring himself to open it. "What right have I," he said to himself, "to receive language which *now* he could not address to me? It was not to *me* this letter was written. The touch of this bloody hand shall not pollute it."—He was restrained by some secret feeling from destroying it, but he buried it at the bottom of his portmanteau; and if at times, in turning over his linen, his eye chanced to rest upon it, it never did so without shrinking.

He little suspected what this letter actually contained; had he done so, his behaviour might perhaps have been different. But, at all events, if there was nothing there that could have tended to administer comfort to his bosom, neither, in the present situation of his thoughts, was there, or perhaps could there have been, anything capable of much aggravating their gloom.

In a word, the Vicar's letter contained an account of the death of Miss Dalton of Grypherwast. The lady had been rapidly declining in her health ever since the period of her accession to the estate of her family, and she had at last sunk under an attack of nervous fever. The Vicar mentioned in his letter, that he was just preparing to set off from Lannwell, in order to be present at his relation's funeral.

It may be easily believed that this was one of the most cheerless journeys that good man ever had the fortune to undertake. From everything that he had heard of the course of Miss Dalton's life since her father's decease, he could have no sort of doubt that she must, long ere now, have executed a will in favour of her brother. If he could have nourished a single dream of the possibility of this being otherwise, that must have been effectually extinguished by the manner in which Sir Charles Catline himself announced to him the event which had now taken place, and requested his presence at Grypherwast on the day appointed for the funeral. But, painful as the circumstances were, Mr. Dalton never dreamed of not complying with that cold and formal request. He knew and felt what was due to his family—to the memory of a long line of ancestors—and to the kindness of his late benevolent kinsman, whose only child was about to partake his recent grave. This child, too—he had once loved Barbara Dalton. She had loved him too, and loved him long. She had drooped and pined because her love was unhappy. It was he, it was his juvenile love, and his juvenile rashness, that had cast a shade, never to be dispelled, over the whole after-surface of her earthly existence. What wonder that in his breast there was scanty room *now*, when he thought of *her*, for any emotions but those of gentlest compassion and regret, mingled, it may be, with some few lingering stirrings of self-reproach. If there were haughtier and harsher feelings that blended themselves with the reflections even of this humbly-minded, and pure, and single-hearted man, it was not towards the memory of Barbara Dalton that these flung their blacker shadows. Whatever these might be, they pointed not to the dead, but to the living—not to the feeble spirit that had been worked upon, but to the craft which

had worked. In truth, however, such thoughts as these, even thus directed, were but uncongenial guests in a bosom such as his—a bosom wherein

"Revenge and all ferocious thoughts were dead,—"

where, unless in a few less-guarded moments, it was indeed a hard thing for vice itself to stimulate any severer feeling than that of pity—where anger scarcely flamed ere it was extinguished in sorrow—where even contempt chastened itself into compassion. But besides all this, Mr. Dalton still owed a duty to the living. Mrs. Elizabeth was still at Grypherwast, and he foresaw distinctly that henceforth it must be his part to watch over her grey hairs. It was extremely possible that Miss Dalton might have modified her bequest, so as to meet the chance of her aunt surviving her. The reverse, however, was also possible; and, at all events, there could be no doubt it was his business to be at Grypherwast.

He had no wish, however, to intrude himself upon the hospitality of a house which had already, in all probability, passed from the Daltons, so he took care to arrange it so that he should arrive at Grypherwast just in time to be present at the funeral.

As he was riding thither by himself from the coast, he overtook a party of gentlemen who were going in the same direction, upon the same errand. His person was well known to them all, and he had some little acquaintance with one of them. This person introduced him to the others, and they continued to ride in company, although for some time there was very little of conversation.

Mr. Dalton, who had heard them all talking together very earnestly but a few moments before, could not but attribute this sudden pause to his own appearance; and, after a little time, he drew the gentleman with whom he had been previously acquainted, to one side of the road, and hinted to him, in a whisper, that he understood and regretted the nature and cause of this interruption, adding, that it was entirely unnecessary, as it must be well known to him, and to everybody, that he had long ago made up his mind as to what Miss Dalton's will was likely to be.

"My good friend," Squire Dawkins whispered in reply, "you are so far quite right in your guess, do ye see; but if the truth must come out, why, we were just laying our heads together about some little matters; and, let me tell ye in your ear, things have peeped out within these two or three days, that have excited a good deal of surprise here, and perhaps you are more interested in them than you are aware; but, to be sure, 'tis always the safe plan to expect the worst."

"Indeed—indeed, sir," said the Vicar, "I fear you *will* not understand me. I assure you, once for all, that *I* have no more expectation of being my cousin's heir than yourself."

"Thereafter as it may be," quoth Mr. Dawkins; "but let me tell you, Mr. Dalton, that there's ne'er a gentleman of this country that will not be very heartily pleased, if you find yourself mistaken. But, not to go about the bush, Mr. Dalton, Sir Charles Catline has been in very ill temper this week past, and more especially ever since the poor lady was given over by the doctors, he has been not like the same man. 'Tis even so, I assure ye, sir. Why, I met him myself but yesterday, close to his own house at Pyesworth, and, by Jupiter, his face was as black then as his hatband is just now."

"Sir Charles, no doubt, loved his sister. Why should we be surprised at that?"

"Aha!" whispered Dawkins, even in a lower note than before—"Aha! my good friend, that glove won't fit. Nay, nay, Mr. Dalton, 'tis perhaps cruel in me to say so much as I have done; but the fact of the matter is, that it is universally suspected here among the neighbours, that there is something in the will by no means to Sir Charles's mind."

"Then 'tis certain that there *is* a will?"

"Ay, ay—no question of that; but, between ourselves, it was not Sir Charles Catline's attorney that wrote it, and that's just one of the things that people hereabouts have taken notice of. But what signifies talking, Mr. Dalton? If things be as they ought to be, depend on't 'twill be a great pleasure to us all. Catline's a very good fellow, and a very obliging neighbour, that I shall say for him; but my own forefathers have been here these two or three hundred years bygone, and hang it, it may be all folly to say so, but when I hear of an old family quitting the country, why, I can't help thinking 'tis the loss of an old friend."

Squire Dawkins was talking away in this style with the Vicar when they were interrupted by the arrival of another company of gentlemen, likewise in black, some of whom remarked, that they were perhaps rather late, and that it might be well to get on more rapidly. This motion, which was extremely agreeable to Mr. Dalton, was followed by all present; and they advanced to Grypherwast at a trot too brisk to permit much conversation of any kind, and quite incompatible with anything like the whispers of a confidential communication.

The Vicar and his companions, on reaching the Hall, were ushered at once into the great drawing-room, which was crowded with very nearly the same assemblage that had been called together some eight months before, by the obsequies of Miss Dalton's father. They had scarcely entered the apartment ere a sort of murmur seemed to pass round the different groups by which its floor was occupied. The Vicar had no time given him for guessing as to the meaning of this buzz, which, however, he could not doubt was connected with his own appearance. He had not stood there a

couple of minutes ere an old grey-headed Baronet, who had been a very intimate friend of the late Squire Dalton, came up and whispered in his ear, shaking him at the same time most potently by the hand, and closing his left eye in a very significant fashion—"Wish ye joy, cousin, wish ye joy, from my heart." Having done this, the knight turned on his heel, and resumed with great composure the aspect and attitude of that decorum which became a man of his consequence in a room filled with a company so motley in its materials. He was succeeded, after the pause of a second or two, by a bluff bald-headed gentleman-farmer, who thrust both his hands deep into his capacious pockets, made as reverent a bow to the Vicar as the stiffness of his back would permit, muttered between his teeth—"Right after all,—" and retreated. And then again, almost before this rustic salutation had been recovered from, there drew near no less a personage than the Very Reverend the Archdeacon of ——, the rosiest and the sleekest of all the wearers of the black apron. This dignitary shook Mr. Dalton's hand as never was hand of poor Vicar shaken by that of wealthy Archdeacon before or since, and dropped these words slowly and softly from his oily lips,—"Be composed, brother; I pray God you may be enabled to sustain this without being over much puffed up. It is on such occasions that one should be most anxious to display the equanimity which springeth from contempt of the world. O! Mr. Dalton, we must remember that, after all, our treasure is laid up elsewhere."

But the Vicar had scarcely recovered from the effects of the Archdeacon's condescension, ere a thrust equally home, though in quite a different sort, proceeded from a poor old Curate, whose coat was as bare of nap as a frog's is of feathers,—"I hope you won't think me intrusive," whispered he, in the most humble way imaginable; "but we're old acquaintance, Mr. Dalton, and when you're leaving Lannwell, perhaps you'll remember my boy James—Poor fellow, he was third wrangler, and yet he has never been able to get a title yet."

These various salutations came so thick upon each other's heels, that our worthy friend could scarcely stare in reply to the one of them, ere a blush was called into his cheek by the other. The last was the most perplexing of all; but the Curate had not half finished his recapitulation of his son's merits and misfortunes, when the whole company was suddenly silent—dead silent. Mr. Dalton looked round, and perceived at once the cause of this—Sir Charles Catline had entered the room, and taken his place at the upper end of it, arrayed in the full costume of the chief mourner. When his eye met Mr. Dalton's, he bowed to him very low, but without leaving his station. The Vicar returned the obeisance with similar formality, and for a few moments there was a perfect pause on all sides—a pause during which one might have heard a pin fall. Mr. Dalton, a good deal perplexed, it is not to be denied, in consequence of what had been said to him from so many different quarters, could not help keeping his eyes fixed upon Sir Charles all this while. His gaze was involuntary—but it was steadfast—and the Baronet once and again met and shrunk from it. The good Vicar was no very skilful peruser of human faces, yet he saw enough to convince him, that some secret agitation lurked beneath the coldness and calmness of that surface; and perhaps a far more practised speculator than he might have puzzled himself in vain to go deeper. Was it the lingering shame of successful, or the ill-suppressed spleen of baffled artifice?—Or could, from some unknown cause, these two feelings, near enough a-kin at times in their expression, be blended here together in one bosom?—

The door was thrown open, and Sir Charles, stepping instantly forward, said, "Mr. Dalton, will you be pleased to walk here?" The Vicar saw that everybody was making respectful place for him, and he obeyed, in a mixture of emotions which we shall not attempt describing.

Sir Charles and he walked side by side behind Barbara Dalton's bier. As they went along, they found ranged, by the way they had to pass, all the children of the school of which she had been half patroness, half teacher. The poor little children were dressed uniformly in deep mourning, and the simple expression of grief, curiosity, and natural awe that sat upon their innocent faces, might have rebuked the stirring passions of the merest worldly bosom that was there. The tears on those young cheeks recalled all the Vicar's wandering thoughts, and fixed them on the bier that he was following. These were the children of one who had, for his sake, cut herself off from the world, and the world's pleasures, and the world's ties. They were the symbols of that tenderness which, the natural outlet dammed up by a rash, perchance a rude hand, must needs find another channel to flow in. But for him, she might have been a wife, a mother—perhaps a living and a happy one. No wonder that a solemn tear stole down *his* cheek, while "dust to dust" was echoed from the stately sepulchre of his forefathers over the descending coffin of the first love of his youth. No wonder that, at that moment, he was capable of despising all the possessions, all the hopes that the grave bounds. No wonder that he turned him from the closed tomb with a heart too full of sadness to hold one drop of bitter.

The service was scarcely finished, ere Sir Charles Catline disengaged himself from the company, and proceeded, attended by only two persons, of whom his attorney was one,

to the house. Two or three voices immediately whispered, "Mr. Dalton—Mr. Dalton, don't you see they've gone to read the will, Mr. Dalton?" But the Vicar had received no invitation, and he hesitated for a moment, until some one reminded him, that, if it were but as the heir at law, it was his business to be present. He followed Sir Charles's party, and overtook them near the end of the wood. On observing his approach, the Baronet whispered to his attorney, who hung back, and joined the Vicar.

The instant Sir Charles and the other gentleman were beyond the wood, our attorney stopped abruptly within the shade, and said to the Vicar, "Mr. Dalton, I presume you wish to hear the will read—but, as a friend, I may just mention, that the fact is, you are nowise interested in it. It was not I that drew the deed, sir; but I have just been informed by the gentleman who was employed, that your name does not occur——"

"The estate goes at once to Sir Charles Catline?"

"Yes, at once to that family, Mr. Dalton."

"Ah! then I have the more reason to be present—I must see what provision is made for Mrs. Elizabeth."

"Ah! very properly thought—very prettily thought indeed, sir—but the fact is, Mr. Dalton, 'tis impossible to account for these things—the fact, however, is, that our late friend had not, I believe, contemplated the chance of predeceasing Mrs. Dalton, at the time when the draught was prepared. I am really concerned that it should have been so; but, as I remarked before, was not consulted on the occasion—odd enough that too—had long been in habits of intimacy—but however—'Tis a world of disappointment this, Mr. Dalton—we all find that, Mr. Dalton—'tis at least comfortable to reflect, that the old lady had no want of anything—though, to be sure, if she had, considering what hands——"

"I dare say she will go with me to Lannwell," said the Vicar—the thought was perhaps not meant to be uttered—but, however that might have been, the words were spoken.

"To Lannwell?—but I hope I am not intrusive, Mr. Dalton. It had been supposed by your friends here, that you were on your way to Oxford—I beg pardon, but——"

"My way to Oxford?"

"Ay, yes—I beg pardon again, sir—but I really was quite unprepared for this—perhaps you have missed your letters, sir."

"Missed my letters?—On my way to Oxford?—What is all this mystery?—What is it?" said the Vicar, raising his voice—"I pray you speak out, sir."

"Ah, sir! indeed, indeed, I am most heartily sorry to be——"

"Oxford! My boy! Speak the word at once, sir—my poor boy——"

"I—I crave your pardon, sir—I—I beg you'll forgive me, sir—I—I—I assure you, sir, that, according to the newspaper account, sir, there is still——"

"Newspaper! where is it, sir?—what is it, sir?—Oh God!"

"Mr. Dalton—my dear Mr. Dalton, your agitation alarms me. I have the paper in my pocket, sir—here it is, sir—'tis only a duel, sir—a duel about a girl, sir—Young men will be young men, sir—here's the paper, sir—your son's not much hurt, sir—'tis at the top of the third page, I think, sir—young men—ay, here it is, 'Unfortunate fracas'—no, that's not it—'Love and honour'—ay, ay, that's it—'Oxford, the thirteenth'—that's the date, Mr. Dalton—there's the paper for you, my dear sir."

The Vicar read, the attorney the while looking over his shoulder, the following paragraph from a morning paper of March the 14th.

"LOVE AND HONOUR—DISTRESSING OCCURRENCE. *Oxford, 13th.*

"A meeting took place yesterday evening between two gentlemen, both of this University—Mr. Chisney of Christ-Church and Mr. Dalton of * * * College. Melancholy to relate, both pistols took effect. Mr. C. is considered to be in a very hopeless state; his antagonist, who was less severely wounded, has already been committed to the Castle under a Vice-Chancellor's warrant.

"This occurrence has excited a great sensation among all circles here; the more so, that the parties had long been in habits of the strictest intimacy."

"FURTHER PARTICULARS.

"*Fuit ante Helenam.*"—HOR.

"10 A.M.

"A fair Cyprian, it has transpired, furnished the occasion of the above fatal disagreement. The seconds, Messrs. S— and H—, have absconded; but, it is supposed, cannot long elude discovery."

Mr. Dalton read the paragraph twice over, folded up the newspaper, and thrust it into the attorney's hand, saying, "I thank you, sir; it is enough."

"My dear Mr. Dalton," said he, pocketing the paper, "I am sure I feel for you—I am a father myself, sir.—Oh, sir, young men little think—but I beg pardon, sir,—I would not be intrusive, sir."

Mr. Dalton was turning from him, but he proceeded with—"I crave your pardon, Mr. Dalton, but I must attend Sir Charles—business must be attended to, sir. Shall I carry your commands, sir? or perhaps—but I think you said, you would come into the Hall yourself, sir."

The Vicar eyed him from head to foot for a moment, and then said, with a sudden burst

of uncontrollable contempt, "Begone, leave me, sir!"—he added, in a whisper of still more cutting scorn, "business must be attended to."

The attorney touched his hat and withdrew—quickening his usual shuffle into something between a hop and a run the instant he had got beyond the firs. Mr. Dalton, hearing the company advancing towards him from the burying-place, leapt aside, and concealed himself behind a thicket of evergreens, until the last footstep sounded distant. He then came back upon the path, and walked by himself to the sepulchre of St. Judith's.

There was no one lingering near the chapel—he seated himself upon the grass, at the root of the pine that was nearest it. Half-shading his eyes with his hand, he gazed towards the tombs. Who shall describe the agony of a despairing father's thoughts? His boy had erred, and had confessed his errors, and they had been forgiven. What would not such a father forgive! But here, what was the result of all that repentance—what was the repayment of all that dear forgiveness! A *Cyprian!* a quarrel about a *Cyprian!* a duel!—a fatal duel—a companion—a relation—a friend.—Guilt, depraved and filthy guilt, upon so young a head!—Blood, kindred blood, upon so young a hand!—Was this the gentle boy that had lain in his bosom?—Was this he whose heart he used to read in his innocent eyes, and so lately too?—Was this he who had partaken his every thought—for whom he had welcomed every care—for whom he had toiled, and wept, and prayed?—Was this the dear pledge of his youthful love—the joy of his manhood—the only hope of his grey hairs?—Alas! had darkness, fatal, sinful darkness, gathered over all that fair promise?—Was he alone in the world?—Was his poverty to have no recompense? Was there to be no staff for his age?

The Vicar sat musing there for a long while—it was but an hour, but what an eternity may be summed in one such hour! He arose and dipped his hands in the stream, and laved a few cool drops upon his brow. He then walked very quickly through the wood, and being perfectly acquainted with the grounds, found his way to the stables, without going near to the house, or mixing with any of the many groups that were still lingering in front of it upon the lawn.

There was only a single lad in the stable, and he made him instantly saddle his horse for him. He mounted, and rode into the village by a back way. Many persons addressed, and would have stopped him, but he returned a hasty salutation to each, and proceeded, without entering into the least conversation with any one. He could hear the whispers of—"Ah! Mr. Dalton, he's away by himself—So Sir Charles has it after all."—He could hear this, and fifty more things of the same sort, accompanied with various gestures of curiosity, of surprise, and perhaps of regret and of compassion.—What cared he now for all these things? What was Grypherwast? What were wills, and heritages, and worldly successes, and worldly disappointments, and worldly curiosities, and worldly comments to him?

As soon as he had passed the village, he pushed his mare into her swiftest pace, and held on without once drawing his bridle, until he reached Lancaster. There, no public conveyance being expected for several hours, he threw himself into a post-chaise, and bid the boy drive towards Manchester. Ere he had got out of the town, however, he remembered that he was altogether unprovided with money for such a journey—and he must needs borrow from some acquaintance. He had some difficulty in accomplishing this; but at last met one of the city clergymen, to whom he had no occasion to explain the circumstances of his case.—He reached Manchester about midnight, and in about an hour's time was seated in one of the Birmingham diligences.

CHAPTER XL.

ARRIVAL OF A FRIEND.

REGINALD, meanwhile, wanted not in the prison, towards which his heart-broken parent was hastening, whatever comfort could be afforded to him by the kindness and sympathy of his juvenile friends in the University. The very morning after his apprehension, his cell was visited in succession by almost all the gentlemen of his own college, with whom he had at any period lived on terms of the smallest intimacy. Their society, their purses, whatever these thoughtless young fellows could command, was offered with such heartiness and sincerity as if he had been the brother of each of them. If it be true, that when Reginald rose that morning, he was as well disposed as any one can be to think hardly of the world—it is no less true, ere the day was done, he had seen abundant reason to reproach himself for such thoughts.

Among other traits of real generosity, that which affected him the most sensibly was the behaviour of Mr. Stukeley. This young gentleman, having reached in safety the house of a friend of his family near Reading, considered himself as, for the present, quite beyond the reach of the Proctor's inquiries. After resting himself for a few hours, he was about to proceed to London by crossways, and in a female disguise, when his friend, who had ridden into the town of Reading for the purpose of gathering intelligence, brought him word of Mr. Dalton's having been taken immediately, and committed to the Castle of Oxford. Mr. Stukeley, who had reckoned pretty securely on Reginald's agility, and scarcely doubted he

was ere this time buried in London, no sooner heard the real situation of things, than he threw himself into a post-chaise, and drove straight back to Oxford. Without even visiting his chambers, he instantly went to the Castle, announced and surrendered himself, and had taken possession, ere Reginald had the least hint of his proceedings, of a cell immediately adjoining that occupied by his friend. After he had settled himself in his new quarters, he asked and obtained admission to those of his neighbour ; and, in reply to all Reginald's reproofs of his rashness, contented himself with swearing that he knew Reginald would have done the same thing, had their situations been exchanged. In short, Stukeley made it his business to have Reginald's room arrayed forthwith in as comfortable a style as its character would permit ; and seemed to devote himself to the task of lightening and soothing his unfortunate young friend's reflections, with a zeal as entire and unremitting as if he had himself been altogether free from trouble and entanglement.

Much, however, as Reginald felt all the kindness which his misfortunes had thus called into action around him, it is not to be supposed that even this could have much effect in lessening the gloom which sat upon his mind, whenever he returned to the contemplation of the real state of his affairs. On the contrary, the better he was compelled to think of the world in which he had been living, the more sorely did he feel the conviction, that, whatever might be the issue of Chisney's illness, he was in truth and for ever done with that world, and with all that belonged to it. That very day the official notification of his having ceased to be a member of the University, was handed to him in his prison. He had expected it ;—yet when it came, it was still a blow. He heard nothing from Mr. Keith—hour after hour he sat watching, but never a word or a line from him. He could account for this only by supposing (which was indeed the case) that the Priest had been very seriously affected by the incidents and exposures of the preceding day. Yet what poor comfort was here !—Keith ill, dying—himself a prisoner, ruined, an outcast at the best !—Ellen Hesketh, alone under such circumstances, bereaved of every support,—what hope could there now be for him or for her ?—His father, too ! when he turned his thoughts to Lannwell, and pictured all that agony—and then perhaps reverted to Chisney, and thought of him cut off, very likely at least to be so, in the prime and pride of his days—when he weighed with himself in calmness all that had been, and all that might be, what wonder that our youth found even kindness a weariness, society a pain, the world a wilderness, his own heart one wound !

It was in vain, therefore, that Stukeley and his other young friends exerted every art in their power to soothe and sustain Reginald's spirits. He was involved in a cloud of melancholy, to dispel which they had no charm. Even when they were in the room beside him, he strove without success to appear to listen to what they were saying. His eye wandered listlessly from the floor of his cell, to the window and the cloudy sky. His ear watched amidst all the buzz of conversation for the whistle of the wind among the ruinous crannies of the old tower, or the long sigh with which it ever and anon swept through the leafless tree-tops far down below him. When he was addressed, he answered with the smile of vacancy, or started as if some sudden trumpet had been blown close to his ear.

His young friends came early to him on the second morning, with intelligence that Chisney had passed a tolerable night, and that the doctors began to entertain strong hope of his recovery. Delighted as Reginald was with this report, his companions, after staying with him for a little while, had tact enough to perceive that he was still quite incapable of deriving any pleasure from their society ; and they therefore adjourned with Stukeley to the adjoining room, hoping that, after being left an hour or two by himself, he might be found in a less desolate mood.

He sat down, when they left him, to make one more attempt (he had already made fifty ineffectual ones) to write to his father. He blotted three or four sheets of paper, and rose in disgust with himself, to throw them in fragments over his window. While he was idly and slowly dropping these from his fingers, his eye chanced to light on a single female figure, which preserved a motionless attitude on the other side of the way, immediately opposite to the tower from which he was looking. She stood so long—the thought crossed his mind, could she be looking toward him ?—Was it Ellen ?—The distance was such, that to distinguish features, or even form, was out of the question—yet the longer he gazed, the more did he seem to recognise something or other that could belong to no one else—there was a lightness—an airiness—it could be nobody but a lady—why should a lady linger there ?—There was a crimson shawl—he had seen Ellen wear one—he rubbed his eyes and strained them again, and he half smiled at himself while he yielded, but he could not resist the notion—and waved his handkerchief. The signal was at least observed—the girl took up the hanging fold of her red shawl, and waved it once and hastily toward him.—It was Ellen—What arm but hers could move with such grace ?—It could be nobody else but his Ellen.

He repeated his motions, and they were again answered in the same manner. He kissed his hand, but just then he heard a loud hem close under his ear, and starting, saw three vile faces, female, yet inhuman, leering up upon him, through the bars of a window immediately below his own. "Come now,

your honour," said one of these creatures, "fair play's a jewel; just give us a pint a-piece, your honour, and we'll not blab."

"D—n your heart," answered another, "if ye're a gentleman, ye'll not grudge us three quarts, bl— me!"

"Now, lookey," chuckled the third, "now lookey, girls, ye've spoilt sport. By Jeremy, she's off—she's off. Well, Lord love us, if I ad a sweetheart, I shid think little on him an he couldn't find his way int' jail, let alone standin pawin away wi't heckercher—he! he!"

Reginald shrunk back with loathing, and flinging himself once more into his chair, covered his eyes with his hand. He had scarcely sat down ere the door of his cell was thrown open, and a new visitor, an old and a grave man, stood before him. Reginald did not at the first glance recognise him. He advanced, and uncovering himself, said,—"Does Mr. Dalton not know me?"

"Mr. Ward!—and here!"

'And where should Mr. Ward be, my young friend? Give me your hand, all will yet go well. You must not think you are alone in the world."

"The world is too kind, sir. I have not merited half this kindness."

"Nay, nay, my dear boy, I have been here these three hours, and I have seen everybody. I have seen Dr. Ainsworth, and I assure you he regrets nothing so much as the loss of you. I have seen the medical people, and their hopes are getting better every hour. You are done with this place, to be sure; and perhaps that's a pity, but you have done nothing but what is honourable to you, and Oxford is not the world."

"Alas! sir, you are little aware of all that Oxford has been to me."

"Perhaps more aware than you imagine. O, my dear, if you had but known what friends you had! But I say no more—we must not come back upon what's over. Have you written to the Vicar?"

"No, sir—I have tried, but I cannot."

"Ay, ay, to be sure he cannot be expected to think of some things like those of other professions—yet remember, my lad, he is a Dalton, though he wears a black coat. I am sure I may answer for him; after a little reflection he will —"

"O, sir, you do not, you cannot know how I have injured my father. I am unworthy of him."

"No, no, you must not speak so—you are a man, and you must speak like a man. I know that you have been careless, extravagant —all of us have been so, more or less, in our time. I know that you have dearly suffered and atoned for your young errors; and I know that if I can be of any use to you, I shall be proud indeed of serving you, for you have the right blood in your veins."

"I feel your kindness, sir; I thank you for it all—I am the most unfortunate——"

"Nay, nay, say not so, Reginald. Pluck up your heart, man, and face the wind. Life and the world are but to begin with you, after all, yet. In a few weeks, one way or other—I strongly hope the best way—this affair will be at an end. End how it may, you can have nothing to reproach yourself with; and then —why, 'tis best to speak plainly—I am nobody, and I can't do anything here, but if you will turn your face to the East, why, there I *can* do something; and whatever can be done, shall be done. With your talents, and with the aid that I can give, such as it may be, everything is before you. In, comparatively speaking, but a few years, there's no saying what may be accomplished. You may look forward to returning home ere your manhood is more than half spent—you may look forward to returning in a condition to be a pride and an honour to all your friends; and, what I am sure you will value more than all the rest, to be the aid and the comfort of your worthy father's old age. Do you fear to leave England?"

"My friends—my father—all—all that I love, are here. Yet why should I hesitate—what right have I—what hope have I—my ties are broken at any rate."

"And you will go? I know you will—'Tis a sore thing, no doubt, parting. I have gone through it myself; and I am here to bless God, that I had to encounter it. Miss Dalton is dead."

"Dead?"

"Ay—but in this hurry you have not heard of it—no wonder. But, however, your cousin is dead, sir, and her estates are gone to Catline."

"I knew that—I expected no other."

"*Tant mieux*—Shame!—but why speak of that?—'Tis done—your race is banished like mine—we should stick the faster to each other, my boy"—and the old man squeezed Reginald's hand very tenderly.

"And now, my dear," he added, after a little pause, "I must just leave you to think of what I have been saying for half an hour. At the end of that time, will you take it amiss if I ask your leave to join my commons to yours and your friend's, who, from what I hear of him, must be a very fine fellow?"

Reginald, of course, could not refuse anything to this true friend. He left him, and proceeded once more to Christ-Church, that he might hear the latest intelligence concerning Mr. Chisney.

Mr. Ward has perhaps sufficiently explained himself—but, in case he should not have done so, the reader is to know that this journey to Oxford had been undertaken entirely in consequence of his seeing in the newspapers the same paragraph which has already been transcribed in the preceding chapter. It may be supposed, that, when he reached the University, and learned what was by that time sufficiently public, the true state of the whole

affair, his anxiety to befriend young Dalton suffered anything but diminution. But it was, above all, when he heard from the lips of the Provost of * * * some of those particulars of Reginald's recent conduct, with which we have already been made acquainted—it was when he heard of his repentance, embodied in voluntary humiliation—it was then that his heart bled for the thought of what this young scion of a noble tree had been exposed to—it was then, indeed, that he resolved to lend heart and hand to uprear the blossom, over which so early a blight seemed to have been hovering.

Reginald, on his part, felt, with all his accustomed warmth, the weight of kindness which this old man was pressing upon him. As for the prospects which he had been opening to him, the truth is, that our youth had as yet been altogether unable to bring his mind deliberately to the contemplation of them. Till he had seen his father—till Chisney's fate was ascertained—he could spare few thoughts from them ; what few he could spare were Ellen's—and they were scarcely less dark, less troubled than the others. Little, however, as he could command his meditations, it need not surprise any one to hear, that even the proposal to leave the soil of England, was not *now* capable of adding any very perceptible shade to their fixed and settled gloom. The thoughts of parting with his father—with Ellen too—what these were, we need not attempt to tell. But the die was cast—his life was changed—with them he might not be—why not have the sea, too, between? There *are* moments in which even the cup of misery is not loathed the more for being full to the brim—there are moments when the sick heart disdains to mingle its draught—when the unchequered blackness yields the best repose to the weary eye—and such were his.

Notwithstanding all this, however, Reginald exerted himself that evening, so as to conceal at least the most painful part of his emotions. Mr. Ward, who, it seemed, had taken lodgings in the immediate neighbourhood, sent from thence the materials of a very handsome little repast, and spent the evening with Stukeley and our hero, until the hour came at which the gates of the Castle are closed. The best thing, indeed, about such external efforts as Reginald made on this occasion, is this—that they very rarely can be made without producing some internal effect. At least, when that is not so, it is in the case of old and practised sufferers—finished artists in misery—of whom, even after all that we have seen, it can scarcely as yet be said that Reginald was one.

CHAPTER XLI.

CHISNEY PRONOUNCED OUT OF DANGER.

THE third day was verging towards evening, as the old towers of Oxford rose once more on the heavy and languid eye of the Vicar of Lannwell. More than twenty years had elapsed since he saw them. Then, full as he was of youth and youthful hope, he did not leave them without regret—they were the same now, every outline was familiar, every tree was an acquaintance—but, alas! how cold was the eye that retraced them, how weary was the heart to which their beauty had been dear! I believe no one ever approached the scene of his youthful recollections, in after life, and especially after a long absence, without many pensive enough reflections—certainly few have ever approached such a scene in a more melancholy mood than now was his. He was alone, as it happened, in the vehicle. Troops of gay young men on horseback were continually passing and repassing—here and there a solitary cap and gown appeared gliding along the meadows towards the town. Here, as elsewhere, life was holding on its accustomed course—the very bells were chiming the same tunes they used to do—everything was the same ; the stateliness of art, the calm of nature—all were as of old. But where were the familiar faces—where was the expectation of joyful meetings—where were all the long extinguished ardours of young hope, and young ambition, and young fancy? He was a widower and a father—and his only son was a blood-stained prisoner, in the rudest and the darkest of all these towers.

The coach happened to stop at the Mitre. Mr. Dalton, however, did not stay there a moment ; but, jaded and wearied as he was with travel, and want of sleep, and misery, proceeded directly towards the Castle.

He was near the gate, when a black servant ran bare-headed across the street, and said, "My master—my master wants to see you, sir—Mr. Ward has his compliments, and wishes to speak with you, ere you go in."

The Vicar, who could comprehend nothing of this strange interruption, was called to by name at the same moment from the opposite side, and looking round, recognised Mr. Ward himself, who was standing at an open window. Nothing could be less expected than his appearance—but not doubting that he had some good reason for interrupting him at such a moment, he walked across the street. The old gentleman was at the door by the time the Vicar reached it, and drew him in with a smile and a whisper, that could not but convey some comfort to his heart.

Having assured the good Vicar that Reginald's wound had been a mere trifle, and that it was expected Mr. Chisney would be pronounced out of danger ere many more hours passed, Mr. Ward suggested, that he had

much better rest and refresh himself a little, and give his son warning of his arrival, before proceeding to visit him in his prison. The Vicar, whose exhausted condition was but too visible in every look and motion, and whose nerves had been thrown into additional confusion by the welcome intelligence that had been so abruptly communicated, could no longer struggle with his weakness. He sunk into a chair, and a few large tears burst from his eyes. Mr. Ward made him swallow a crust of bread and a glass of wine ; and then seating himself close beside him, took his hands within his own, and began to talk to him calmly, soothingly, tenderly—as if they had been friends all their days.

Of course, the account which Mr. Ward had to give of the unfortunate affair and its origin, plucked from the Vicar's bosom the sorest thorn that had rankled there. He paused for a moment, and told him the story of the servitorship too. It was then that Mr. Dalton squeezed the old man's hand, and while other tears gushed in a flood over his cheek, exclaimed, "I thank God !—he is still my own boy. Now, indeed, am I comforted. Let us go, let us go together !"

Mr. Ward insisted on his washing and changing his linen, and in the mean time dispatched his servant with a message to prepare Reginald for the interview. Even that warning, it will be believed, was far from being enough to make Reginald meet it calmly. The young man was folded, trembling, in a trembling embrace. Minutes elapsed ere the yearnings of either bosom could escape in words. At last they spoke—the words were few on either side, but they were enough. They understood each other so well—syllables were eloquence between *them*.

"Reginald," said the Vicar, laying his hand on the sling which supported his son's wounded arm—"Reginald, my poor boy, had you no thought then of your father? Did you remember me? Did you ask yourself what would become of me?"

Reginald gazed upon him, but made no answer.

"Alas ! my boy, you must have broken this heart—it has nothing but you—I am alone."

"I, too, am alone, father—I am weary of the world—I must leave you—I must leave all that I have loved—I must wear out my years far away from you beyond the sea."

"Beyond the sea? Will you desert me in my old age?"

"Perhaps I may return ere then. There may still be some hope for us, dear father. My heart at least will linger behind me."

"What is it that makes you speak thus? We are poor—we may endure our poverty together."

"No, father, it is I who have made you poor—I will not be a burden on you any more—I will do as Mr. Ward says—I will endure it all—I will go to India—I will fight with life among strangers, in the hope of returning one day to you.—What can I do in England?"

The Vicar was silent. He perceived at once, that Mr. Ward had been promising his son the hope of success. What hope could *he* set against that? Should *he* be the bar between Reginald and aught that was good? Could he shrink from any pain that was to purchase good for him?—His heart was in a turmoil, his eyes rested on the ground—his lip quivered in paleness—he was silent.

Mr. Ward, who had purposely deferred joining them, until they should have been for a little while together, now made his appearance, along with Mr. Stukeley, and his own servant, who carried dinner upon a tray. But ere they had finished their repast, three or four young gentlemen of * * * came all together into the room, and announced, with all the clamour of juvenile congratulation, that the physicians had at last put their name to the certificate ;—that the order for their companion's liberation on bail might be expected in the course of a few minutes—in a word, that Chisney was pronounced out of danger, and that Reginald and Stukeley might now look on themselves as free.

Although this had been expected, it was surely most welcome intelligence. Stukeley called for a fresh supply of glasses, and filling bumpers for every one, declared that he should sleep that night at Chapel-house, and be at home in Warwickshire next day to dinner ; and nodding to the Vicar and Reginald, said, he should go home with double satisfaction, if they would accompany him, and remain for a few weeks at the Priory, until Reginald was completely recovered from the effects of his wound.

Reginald shook his head, and Mr. Ward replied by saying, that he had reckoned upon both Mr. Dalton and his young friend going at once with him to London ; but added, that nothing would give him greater pleasure than to have Stukeley also for his guest there. Stukeley, however, would not accede to this ; his mother, he said, was old and infirm, and his first duty was to repair to her ; but that, in the course of a fortnight, he should probably have the pleasure of meeting with them again, as he had already taken chambers in the Temple, and meant to reside there part of the Spring. Stukeley talked of his own and of Reginald's motions with an air of gaiety, that showed how entirely incapable he was, in spite of all his kindness, of comprehending the serious nature of those consequences which the late affair had entailed. Rich, easy, careless, he already looked on the whole of what had happened as a bagatelle, so far as it concerned himself ;—and as for Reginald, having heard something of the conversation that passed between him and Mr. Ward, he was more than half inclined to

think that his young friend would, on reflection, find cause to consider the incident, however painful, that had brought the old Indian to Oxford, as, in the main, a very fortunate one—the immediate release at least from a condition of despondence and distress—the first step, perhaps, in the issue, to a career of independence, wealth, distinction, and honour.

CHAPTER XLII.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

WITHIN an hour the order for liberation came, and they all left the Castle together, for Mr. Ward's lodgings. The sun had been set for some time — the carriage had been ordered to be in readiness early next morning —Reginald had but a few hours more to spend in Oxford.

The Vicar proposed that his son should walk with him to * * *, and bid farewell to Barton. The Recluse had never come to see him during his confinement, but he had sent daily inquiries, and our youth attributed his staying away to nothing but the nervous dread with which, as he well knew, he regarded the idea of being thrown into the society of strangers. Reginald, however, had feelings which rendered him very reluctant to visit * * * any more. He could not bear the notion of treading the ground from which he had been expelled — he foresaw nothing but pain, and he entreated his father to go alone to his old friend, and speak in his name whatever was suitable to the occasion.

Mr. Ward insisted on accompanying the Vicar on his walk. Stukeley also departed. Reginald was once more alone.

He waited for a few minutes, and then wrapping a cloak over him, so as to conceal his bandaged arm, and drawing down his hat upon his brows, he proceeded directly to Christ-Church. Chisney had acted like a ruffian, but he had shed his blood, and he was about to leave England, and he could not bear to go without exchanging forgiveness.

He was instantly admitted to his apartments, and, after a moment's pause, to his bed-chamber. He was sitting up in his bed, and his brother James, almost as pale as he, was standing close beside him.

The moment the latter saw Reginald, he advanced towards him, and with a very grave air, but one of perfect kindness, shook him by the hand. "This is like yourself," said he. "*You*, Reginald, have nothing to reproach yourself with—my brother has suffered for his offence. You will embrace, and be friends."

"Most willingly," said Frederick, and he put forth his hand. "Come hither, Reginald. Will you carry my sorrow, my deepest sorrow, my shame, and my repentance, to her that I injured?"

Reginald saw what pain that proud spirit was stooping to. "O, sir," he said, "let us forget all that is past. I came not hither to hear this—I only came to shake hands with you—I am leaving England, and I would fain leave nothing but kindness behind me."

"Ay, but you *must* bear my message. Heavens!—How durst I!—O, Reginald, you know not half my villainy!"

"'Tis repented, Frederick."

"Bitterly, ay, bitterly—my fate has been too merciful. Oh! sir, I cannot bear to look even on you;" and with this Chisney sunk down, and drew the bed-clothes over his face.

His brother squeezed Reginald's hand, and drew him gently towards the door. "Go now, my friend—leave us."

"I will—farewell, sir, and God bless you, and all yours."

"Farewell—and yet, what said you—when do you go—where is your father?—my heart bleeds for him too—where are you going?"

"To London to-morrow—soon to India."

"To London? We, too, shall be there. You will come and see us, Reginald—you will come and see Mrs. Chisney?"

"I will, sir. You have always been kind—too kind."

Thus they parted. Reginald had one more farewell before him—one more. It harrowed his soul, but it must be.

Reginald was in a feeble state of body, but the evening breeze played coolly upon his worn cheek, and he walked even rapidly towards St. Clements. He reached the end of the High-street without being recognised or addressed by any one; but there he found his progress interrupted by a considerable crowd, and, after a moment, there appeared the first of a troop of horsemen, who were coming down by the side of the gardens from Holywell. As soon as they reached the street the military music struck up, and the crowd began to cheer them heartily, crying, "The Blues! The Blues!—God bless the brave Oxford Blues!"

"Ah! Heaven bless the pretty young men," said an old woman, who was standing close by Reginald. "'Tis but a pitiful thing to think that perhaps few of them will ever see Old England again."

Reginald pressed forward to see the march of this fine soldiery; their cased plumes and floating mantles announced them to be setting out upon a night march, and he at once comprehended that they were under orders for the Peninsula. Having got within the crowd, which, being Oxonian, made way for anything in the shape of a gentleman, he continued to walk alongside of the horses, admiring them and their riders. He could not help saying to himself, "These hearts, now, seem all to be light as air, and yet which of them is not quitting his country—how many of them must be quitting fire-sides, and friendships, and loves, and how many of them will

never return—and why should I, that am not perhaps going to wars and battles, show less manhood than the least of these?"

The horsemen were talking gaily as they moved, and every attitude exhibited life, spirit, exultation. Quite suddenly a young officer left his place, and checking his horse close by the foot pavement of the bridge, said,—"Mr. Dalton, unless I am mistaken."

"My name is Dalton," said he, much surprised; "but I am afraid I must——"

"Nay, no apologies, I pray, sir. You don't remember me—my name is Macdonald."

Reginald, with some difficulty, recognised the young gentleman, who had spent a day at Thorwold Hall, the last summer, along with his old acquaintance, Mr. Ralph Macdonald, of Edinburgh, and his wife. "I beg your pardon," said he; "your uniform, Mr. Macdonald, has made such a change upon you. I hope your father is well?"

"Quite well, sir," answered the young soldier, dismounting; and he led his horse for a little way, walking by Reginald's side. "The truth is, sir," he proceeded, "that I should scarcely have stopped you, but for a letter from my father, which I have here, and which the quickness of this march puts it out of my power to deliver. 'Tis for an old friend of his who resides somewhere in this town—I think you are acquainted with him."

"Mr. Keith?"

"The same. My father, understanding we were to cross the country in this direction, made me the bearer of this. I believe it contains money. Might I ask the favour of you to deliver it, and make my apologies for not waiting on him?"

"Certainly," said Reginald. "I will carry it to his house immediately. You are going to Spain?"

"The most of the regiment is, immediately; but I am only a recruit, and I believe I shall stay a few months behind them, to go out with the two troops that are coming from Ireland."

"I shall take care of your letter, but I fear the gentleman it is addressed to is very ill."

"Sorry to hear that; but, however, I'm getting behind, and that won't do. Good-bye, sir." And with this the Cornet vaulted, with all the pride of juvenile horsemanship, into his saddle, and kissing his glove, cantered after the rest of the line.

Reginald remained for a moment, gazing after the horsemen, who were by this time winding along the London road. "How strange is this," he could not help thinking to himself. "If it had not been for this boy's father, I should never have seen either Keith or Ellen; and now, now that I am to part with them for ever, I must go as his messenger! His son sends me to them for the last time."

There was no time, however, for pondering on such things. Reginald was afraid that his father and Mr. Ward might have returned even already from * * *, and be wondering at his absence. He hastened into the Priest's, and finding the servant in the door-way, had no occasion to knock for admittance. The old woman stared, however, as if a spectre had glared upon her, when our pale youth appeared; and it was not until he had fairly passed her, and entered the house, that she found her tongue to tell him that it was even as he had suspected—that Mr. Keith had been, and was, worse, far worse, than he had ever been before. In a word, that he had had a paralytic affection the same night that Reginald had been sent to the Castle, and that, though he had recovered, in a great measure, the use both of his speech and of his limbs, there was still but too much reason to fear a speedy relapse, and a fatal termination of his illness.

"And where is Miss Hesketh?"

"She has scarcely left his bed-side. She is there now."

"And no one else?"

"Nobody."

"Tell her I am here." But he had scarcely said the words, ere Ellen herself was at his side. She had heard his step, his voice, and ran down the stair. But now she paused and hung back, and casting her large melancholy eyes upon the ground, whispered something that even his ears could not understand.

"Ellen, fear not," said Reginald. "He is well—I am free. I have but come to bid you farewell."

"Mr. Keith—he is asleep—he is asleep now; but I must not leave him alone."

"For one moment," said he, solemnly. And then turning to the servant, he asked her to go up-stairs, and come back if the Priest awakened. The woman obeyed, and he walked into the parlour, to which Ellen, half with the air of hesitation, followed him.

But this was all over the moment they were alone. "Come, Ellen," said he, "I must kiss your cheek—I must kiss it once more—one farewell kiss. And yet why should that be? I am come to bid you farewell—perhaps for ever."

"Farewell!—and for ever?"

"Ay, Ellen—feel this heart. It bleeds,—indeed, my girl, it bleeds!" And with that he drew her to his bosom, and kissed her passionately, and gazed upon her face. She shook, her lips shook—water gathered over the rich dark lustre of the eyes with which she seemed to be reading his soul. She buried her face on his neck—her raven tresses burst loose, and fell in all their luxury upon his bosom. The boy strained her in his grasp—one agitation thrilled in either pulse. She kissed him—with a cold, moist, quivering, lingering lip, she kissed his cheek and his brow. He threw her back—he started to his feet, and, suddenly the master of himself, said, "We are very young, and very miser-

able; but, Ellen, it is not for me to add to what is, and must be. You already know that I am ruined here—that I am undone—that my hopes are blasted—that my life is changed."

"And all for me," said the girl, staring on him wildly, and not weeping.

"No, no," he answered, "'tis not so, truly. Ellen—dearest Ellen, my fate is fixed. I thought myself friendless, but I have found one good friend. He is to provide for me, but that is in India—I am to go thither immediately—there is no need for doling it out by degrees. I must go to India—I must leave everything—I must leave you. What is the world?"

"May God in heaven bless and prosper you!" said she, earnestly, forcing composure. "May God bless you, Dalton, and may you find that there is happiness! When do you go?"

"To-morrow, early in the morning. I must go *now*—What matters that? What matters the day or the hour? We are parting. I can scarcely, even now, believe my own words, my own heart—we are parting. Give me one of these black ringlets, Ellen—it will lie on my heart, and perhaps lighten it."

"They are yours—take them."

He cut off a single glossy curl, kissed it fervently, and folded it into his bosom. "And *you*, Ellen," he said, "What is to be your fate?—Where, when our friend is no more, where then are you to be — am I to know nothing of you?—Is there to be no hope? If fortune should favour me, will you not come over the sea and be my wife, far away, in a land of strangers? How, where am I to find you? We know not what may yet be—we are blind feeble creatures—good may yet be in store for us. You will not forget me, Ellen?"

"Ask your own heart *that*, Reginald!" and she sobbed aloud, and once more she threw herself upon his breast. But she, too, in her turn, could summon strength. She raised herself and spoke with a calm voice, but rapidly, as if in fear that it might lose its calmness. "I wished to have given all my heart to God, Dalton—it was you who took that power from me, and yet that wish half remains. You have made me know what love is. Shall I — Oh, no, I shall not — I cannot reproach you. I have tasted love—I have tasted happiness—troubled love, indeed—sad and troubled, but yet something happier than I had dreamed of—something sweeter than I had thought was in this world—and now we are to part!—Fear not that I shall love another. I shall be alone—but I shall not be all alone while I think that you are *there*—even there, the wide seas between us—time, and sea, and fortune—take my whole heart, my whole resolution at once with you—I am yours. If you ever ask me to come, I will come. If you ever come to me, you will find me the same—old, perhaps—faded—with grey hairs, Reginald, if you stay so long from me—but still, lay your hand here, Reginald Dalton, you will find this heart in the same place, and beating *thus*. Do you feel how it beats?"

Reginald, even in the present darkness of his spirit, was soothed at once, and nerved, by the calmness with which this forlorn girl spoke the language of tenderness that would not be withered, of faith that could sustain itself even in the absence of hope. He told her all that had happened to him—he poured out the whole history of his heart. She listened to him with pensive earnestness—she partook everything that was his—all their thoughts and fears were common. Sorrows, equal and partaken, had dissolved much even of that which is in itself beautiful in the love of lovers. They had no time for the graceful luxuries of reserve. Their parting hour had the first ineffable charm of virgin love—its purity, its fervour, its modesty, and its passion; but grief blended with these the full and sober intercommunion of wedded hearts.

Compelled by the friendless necessities of her situation to make the most painful themes of reflection familiar to herself, Miss Hesketh communicated to Reginald, in the course of this interview, a plan which she had, it seemed, meditated for some time, in the view of her old friend and protector's being taken from her ere fortune should have made it possible for her to turn to her lover for shelter. This was to join herself, without, of course, taking any religious vows, to one of those societies of English nuns that had recently been established in Yorkshire. Mr. Keith himself had approved, perhaps in the first instance suggested, the resolution; and had already held some communication, by letter, in regard to this subject, with the Superior of the house, a lady of very illustrious birth, with whom, at an earlier period, he had been acquainted on the Continent. As things stood, no doubt, this plan appeared to our young gentleman one of the most desirable that could have been adopted. It was arranged that Miss Hesketh should, in the mean time, write to him at London, and that she should, after he had sailed, continue to send her letters under cover to Mr. Ward, who would take care to forward them to India. He, on the other hand, being aware that, wherever Ellen might be residing, her money matters must continue to be managed through Mr. Ralph Macdonald, agreed that he would send through that channel whatever letters he might have occasion to write, before hearing of her ultimate destination being fixed. These particulars being arranged, Ellen led Reginald up-stairs, where, finding Mr. Keith still fast asleep, he was constrained to entrust Ellen with his adieus. The young lady then came down again with Reginald:—they lingered together

for a while in the door-way ; but the moon, which had ere this risen in all her glory, warned the youth that he had already lingered far too long ; and he was just summoning all his manhood to tear himself away, when two figures drew near, and before he had time to think, or Ellen the heart to retire, he heard himself addressed in his father's voice.

Mr. Ward and he having returned to their lodgings, had waited for an hour or two in patience, but at last began to feel a little uneasy about Reginald's absence. Mr. Barton had just been telling them all the little that he knew of his pupil's habits ; but, indeed, Mr. Ward had before that been pretty well informed as to these matters ; and knowing, as they both did, the scene, and, in part at least, the occasion of the recent unfortunate quarrel, it was nowise wonderful that it should have occurred to the two gentlemen, that Reginald might have gone towards St. Clements. Neither of them, indeed, had any suspicion of Reginald's serious attachment there ; but they knew that he had rescued a young lady, with whom he had been acquainted, from violence ; that that young lady's guardian and uncle was the Catholic Priest of Oxford ; and that the Priest was generally understood to be in extremity. Perhaps, therefore, Reginald might be detained by offices of friendship, which the domestic concerns of this family called upon him to perform—perhaps in these he might have occasion for their assistance—at all events, the night was advancing, and they could do no harm by seeking for him there or elsewhere.

But though Reginald immediately answered his father's question, and descended from the Priest's gate to join him and Mr. Ward, Ellen Hesketh was at that moment quite overcome with her feelings, which even now had been in some measure taken by surprise. She lingered in the door-way—half unconscious—trembling and gazing, mute and motionless. The moonlight fell full upon her pale countenance, her dark dishevelled curls, and her white dress. The Vicar of Lannwell gazed upon her—even Reginald could not help perceiving, that some extraordinary interest fixed his eyes. He advanced half a step, and murmured, "Who is this?—these eyes—these tresses—that form!"—but he checked himself in the instant. Reginald whispered, "Miss Hesketh."

"Hesketh?" said the Vicar—"but what am I thinking of, boy?—'Twas but a foolish dream, I believe—a likeness—a mere nothing."

The door was closed. Reginald had seen Ellen Hesketh for the last time—he had just had the last glimpse of her beauty—what wonder that his thoughts refused to follow any other guidance but one?—he heard the Vicar as if he had been speaking to vacancy, and, taking hold of his arm, forced him away, unconscious (perhaps both of them were unconscious) of what he was doing. Mr. Ward, who began to suspect something of what had been passing in Reginald's heart, only felt the more on that account, that the sooner they reached their lodgings, it would be the better for him ; and accordingly, they all without delay walked thither. There was something so imposing in the moonlight majesty of the High-street, that, even had care been a stranger to every one of their bosoms, it need not have seemed at all surprising that they traversed that scene in silence.

Reginald, however, leaning upon his father's arm, had, in the progress of the walk, recovered all the composure he had lost before. The Vicar said never a word more about Miss Hesketh ; and Mr. Ward, so far from touching upon that, was indefatigable in his exertions to introduce and sustain conversation that might interest the father and the son, without recalling to either any subject of personal feeling.

They supped together in Mr. Ward's room, and immediately afterwards retired to bed.

They set off next morning, at a very early hour, while, as yet, there was not the least stir in the stately streets of Oxford—while the light of day was yet blended with silence profound as midnight—while all those venerable domes, towers, theatres, and temples were lying

"Open unto the fields and the blue sky,
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air."

It was a calm, clear, cool spring morning, and never had the scene appeared more serenely lovely. Reginald's eye, as they were driving rapidly through the city, seemed to peruse every feature of its architecture, as if he would fain stamp it with new and indelible strength upon his memory. After crossing the bridge, he caught one passing glimpse, just one, of St. Clements, the house, the chapel—and then it was all lost—

"The world was all *behind* him."

CHAPTER XLIII.

REGINALD ATTENDS A BALL.

NOBODY ever enters the greatest city in the world, without, in some measure, losing, amidst the million sights and sounds of that unknown and immeasurable existence, the weight of his personal cares, whatever they may be. The young mind of our hero was altogether bewildered in the tumult. Even blighted hopes and parted love could not prevent aimless curiosity, vague wonder, the oppression of magnitude, and the sense of nothingness, from fleeting over him with

succeeding and interchanging influences. It was a misty sunset as they entered Piccadilly —a deep yellow haze was gathering over everything—but this partial obscurity, perhaps, served only to increase the effect of what it seemed striving to conceal. Edifices appeared larger than the truth—streets wider —nothing seemed to have any termination.

They drove at once to Mr. Ward's, in Lower Brook Street ; a house by no means large, but furnished throughout in a very luxurious manner, combining somewhat of an Oriental splendour, with that careful attention to the minutiæ of comfort, which every one admits to be so peculiarly the characteristic of an English gentleman's residence. Several of the servants were people of colour ; the hangings, whether of paper or of silk, were Asiatic, in taste and in execution ; but the rooms were of moderate dimensions, and there was, in the midst of real magnificence, something that made one feel they were not meant for show, but to be lived in. The old gentleman immediately led the Vicar and Reginald to a suite of apartments, which he desired them to consider as their own ; and one of the most alert Mussulmans in the establishment, received orders to look on himself as entirely appropriated to their service.

The Vicar had not been in town since he was a very young man ; so that the reader will easily imagine how the mornings of the few days his pastoral duties allowed him to remain were occupied. While he and Reginald were satiating themselves with such sights and wonders as might be supposed best to suit their fancy, and mutually reconciling themselves, by thinking and talking of what must be, to the sad prospect of their long separation, their benevolent host was employed in unremitting exertions among his friends immediately connected with the Mercantile Oligarchy of Leadenhall-street ; and in the course of a very short time, he had the satisfaction of assuring his guests, that they might now look upon the matter as settled. He had procured from one of the Directors the promise of an appointment, either civil or military (which of these it might prove to be Mr. Ward rightly supposed Reginald Dalton would not much care), and this the Director had pledged himself should be given in so short a time, that Mr. Dalton might fairly make his arrangements for sailing with the summer ships of the same year. This Director and Ward were equally of opinion, that Reginald ought, in the mean time, to be labouring hard in acquiring the elementary knowledge of Persian and Hindostanee, by carrying to which languages the skill which his classical education had given him, he might, whatever were his particular destiny in our Eastern empire, be sure to augment, in the most essential manner, his prospects of ultimate, and indeed of speedy success.

Much as London had to show our youth, nobody will doubt, that, in the present situation of his feelings, hovering as his mind was between the languor of disappointed affections and the anxiety to repair, to himself and his father, the injuries of which his culpable negligences had been productive, the prospect of having something to engage and occupy him seriously was a welcome relief.

The Vicar, however, could not tear himself away, until he had made Reginald promise to come down to Lannwell for a week, previous to his final departure. He told him, that, in all probability, he would find his old friend Mrs. Elizabeth established by that time under his roof; and it must not be doubted that Reginald, under all the circumstances of the case, derived some comfortable reflections from the belief that his father's solitary life was to be cheered by the presence of such an inmate. It having been determined, therefore, that before August came, Reginald should pay this parting visit, and that, in the mean time, he and his father should write to each other every week—the good Vicar bade adieu to Mr. Ward's hospitable mansion, and our youth was left in the sole possession of his apartments, where his mornings were to be spent among Moonshees and Lexicons, and his evenings in the cultivated society to which Mr. Ward had already been introducing him.

This society consisted almost entirely of elderly persons, gentlemen who had, like Mr. Ward himself, spent lives of adventure in India, and were now enjoying the fruits of their own exertions in an evening of repose, and, in general, of considerable luxury. The far greater part of them were bachelors, and they naturally sought in an eternal interchange of dinners among themselves, what, if they had had wives and families, they might have, comparatively speaking, dispensed with. For the most part, they were distinguished by the possession of varied and highly interesting information, more especially in regard to the history, and literature, and manners, of Eastern nations. Without exception, they were keen politicians, and stout aristocrats. Their conversation around a board loaded with the display of every luxury that wealth can purchase, had nothing of the effeminacy which luxurious habits are so apt to bring along with them. On the whole, Reginald could not help being stimulated by what he heard and saw—the narrations of enterprise, and the rewards of merit. Yet they were old men, and there were certainly many moments when he sighed, as he sat a listener among them, for the freedom, the equality, the careless ease, and ready sympathies, of that juvenile companionship which he had so recently been accustomed to. But he was daily getting more and more occupied with his Oriental studies. The more he felt himself dependent,

the more keenly did he thirst after the attainment of independence. The path to that had been pointed out to him; it was also the only path that could lead to the happiness of his father and his love; and he suppressed and endured everything, and hoped and laboured.

He had heard from Oxford that Mr. Chisney was so well as to intend quitting Christ-Church in the course of another week, and that Mr. Keith was still lingering in the same sort of dubious state in which he had left him. He had heard these things, and he was beginning rather to be uneasy in hearing nothing from Lannwell, which he supposed the Vicar must have reached some days ago, when one morning his studies, or his reflections, were interrupted by a visit of his friend Stukeley.

This young gentleman had been a couple of nights in town, and was fairly established in his chambers at the Temple, where he invited Reginald to come and dine with him the same day. Our hero consented, and, in the mean time, walked out with his friend, who had been reproaching him for confining himself too much to his room and his books; and remarking, that his appearance had suffered in consequence of this course of life.

They spent part of the morning in seeing a celebrated collection of pictures, and there Mr. Stukeley met with some ladies of his acquaintance, to whom he introduced Reginald. A very stately dowager, who seemed to be the principal person in this bevy, expressed her satisfaction, after a little time, that she had met with Mr. Stukeley the very day of her son's coming of age, and invited him and his friend to be present at a ball which she was to give the same evening, in honour of this great occasion. Stukeley bowed instant acquiescence, and Reginald found himself engaged almost before he understood what the character of the engagement was.

Lady Olivia had been conversing apart for a few moments with Stukeley. She turned abruptly to our hero, and said, with a very condescending smile, "I find, Mr. Dalton, that my skill did not deceive me. I thought I could not be mistaken—you have a great deal of the family feature."

To this our youth could only reply by a look of some little confusion, but the dowager proceeded, "Indeed, I thought you must be of the Lancashire Daltons. Perhaps you can give me some news of my old friend, Miss Betty? The Catlines are in town, but I have not seen them yet."

"I am sorry to say that I have heard nothing of Mrs. Dalton, except that it was expected she was to leave Grypherwast immediately."

"Ay, that's the name of their place. Well, 'twas a great shame in the young lady not to think of her aunt; but, to be sure, she could not expect to die before her. I wonder if Miss Betty will come to town now?"

"I really don't know. But I believe she is to reside in Westmoreland."

"O dear, what's the use of burying herself there? and so many old friends here, who would be so happy to see her again? I assure you, few people were more liked. I shall write her, I think, upon the subject. Westmoreland!—That sounds so dismal. No, no, Westmoreland will never do."

"Your ladyship is very kind—but I rather think Mrs. Betty is fond of the country."

"Ah! true—the country's a very pretty thing in certain circumstances. But now that she has lost her brother, and all the rest, and perhaps not very rich—but as to that matter I really have not heard—why, Mr. Dalton, the country's a very *triste* affair, naturally—it requires all the agreements of a handsome establishment. In short—but you understand my meaning—Have ye heard what Miss Betty's income may be?"

"Indeed I have not, ma'am; but I dare say 'tis no great matter."

"Well, I'll write myself—by the way, you know the Catlines—of course, of course. I've sent them tickets—you shall see them to-night. —What is the heiress like?—Her father *was* a handsome man.—Is she like him? Is she pretty?—What may the rental be?—When will she be of age?"

"Miss Catline is a very good-looking girl —but really——"

"Nay, Lady Olivia," said Stukeley, "it is too much to make Dalton praise her—you know 'tis his enemy—his fair enemy—these Catlines have taken an estate from him."

"Oh dear!—bless me, I beg pardon—I had no notion—Were you so very near a connection then?"

"Not at all—not very near, ma'am—but yet, I believe, we were the nearest——"

"Ah! north-country cousins—I understand—"

"Well, I think, the best thing Dalton can do," said Stukeley, smiling, "is to pocket the affront in the mean time, and make up matters by making up to the heiress.—What says your ladyship?"

"Nay, nay, I can't give advice as to these delicate matters," said Lady Olivia. "Upon my word, Miss Catline will have no want of beaux, however—this *is* such an age—I protest, the youngest young men think of nothing but fortune, fortune, money, money.—Oh, indeed, Mr. Stukeley, you've become a mercenary set—very mercenary. No love, now-a-days (the old lady spoke very glibly)—no, no, nothing of that, nothing. Romance is all out of date—quite antediluvian—obsolete, *passée*,—but we're forgetting the pictures. Ah! this is the Rembrandt—No, no, No. 71 —'tis the Carlo Dolce—how could I be mistaken?—Let's take a look at the sweet thing. —Will you find me a chair, Mr. Stukeley?— Thank you, Mr. Dalton.—Come hither, Die —this is better than those Dutch things, an't it, Die?"

Here a party of gentlemen, with whom our

Oxonians had no acquaintance, happened to crowd about the ladies; and they, perceiving that their turn *had* been, and perhaps not much lamenting that such was the case, took the opportunity of leaving the exhibition. As they walked along, Stukeley rallied his friend a good deal upon the subject he had already touched—that of Miss Catline; and assured him, that, if he really had a mind to try his fortune in that way, he had better make a good use of the opportunity Lady Olivia Bampfylde's party offered him. "Her ladyship," he added, "has an eye upon her, I saw it at once, for her son, this day's hero—but, between ourselves, 'tis an awkward cross-made spoon, and if the heiress knows what's what, she won't bite."

Reginald told Stukeley very calmly, that this was not a subject on which he liked jesting—in a word, that he considered Sir Charles Catline as a bad man, and that he could not connect himself with him, if his daughter were heiress of twenty Grypherwasts."

"Is Lady Catline in the land of the living, Dalton?"

"Yes—Why do you ask?"

"Pooh, pooh, I only thought, you know, that she might be dead, and that Sir Charles might be come up to look for a successor."

"Well, and if it had been so, Stukeley?"

"Well, and if it had been so, I should have said you were a shrewder fellow than, I am sorry to say, you now seem to be—but I've done, I've done, my dear Dalton—I see the word Catline is no music—I'll not mention it again—I will not, indeed. I confess, however, I have some curiosity to see the set."

"Poor as I am," said Reginald, "I would give something that I were not to see them.—I wish to God we had not met this Lady Olivia."

"My dear Dalton, you speak like a very greenhorn. Why, I suppose you think this is something like one of your county balls, where everybody knows everybody, and everybody sees everybody, and everybody dances with everybody; and all the ladies have the same scandal, and all the gentlemen wear the same hunt-button on their coats. My dear fellow, you're quite out, I assure you. Depend on't, you may very easily be at Lady Olivia's, and just see or hear as little of these people, as if they were all the while at the antipodes—but you've never seen London."

"I've only been here a few days, to be sure—but I have seen——"

"Nothing, depend upon it. But you shall judge for yourself. I'll give you a dozen of champagne (always bating the Lancashires), for every one face that you recognise."

Reginald, conscious of his own inexperience, had strong reason for suspecting, that he was not so very much behind his companion—but Stukeley's good nature was exquisite, and he contented himself with the comment of a smile. They dined at the Temple, where, along with one or two gentlemen, whom Reginald had formerly met at Oxford, there were present several of the genuine Templars—very fine-spoken young men, skilful in the mystery of punning—extremely knowing about the Theatres, the Players, the Reviewers, the Newspapers. These people kept up such a clatter about the Chancellor, and the Chamberlain, and Mrs. Siddons, and Mr. Moore, and the battles of Wellesley, and the battles of Belcher, and Shakespeare, and Tobin, and Costume, and Sentiment, and Laundresses, and Conveyances, and Politics—that Reginald felt himself just as far from home as they would have done, had they been suddenly transported to an Oxford Common-room—to hear all the sort of discussion that then prevailed, and perhaps still lingers there—about Vice-Chancellors, and Proctors, and Doctors, and Schools, and Lectures, and Folio Scholia, and "*the* Politics."

There was one of these youths, the most talkative of the whole, who took occasion to drop a hint, ere the evening was very far advanced, that he was engaged to be at Lady Olivia Bampfylde's ball; and our hero, it must be confessed, heard him say so with a little surprise; for raw as he was in many things, he scarcely thought it possible, that this Mr. Tomlinson could really be a man of fashion. It peeped out not long afterwards, that the said character had written a certain farce, which had enjoyed, a short time before, considerable celebrity—and this might, in some measure, account for the circumstance which Mr. Reginald had been wondering at. But, be all this as it might, Mr. Tomlinson, Stukeley, and Dalton drove to her ladyship's (in Hanover-square), about an hour short of midnight, and our hero found himself surrounded with a scene of splendid confusion, such as, the reader is aware, his small acquaintance with Lancashire hops and Oxonian tea-and-turn-outs could have by no means prepared him to expect or imagine.

The crowded stair-cases, the blaze of lights, the waving of plumes—the endless vista of apartments—the whole glitter and dazzle of the novel scene, affected Reginald with the same mingled feelings of curiosity, admiration, and shyness, which most people may probably remember having experienced the first time they trod the brilliant maze of the *Beau-Monde*. After receiving a silent and lofty recognition from the lady, whom, but for her curtseying to him, he, on his part, should scarcely have recognised again—such was the effect of her curls, her rouge, her diamonds, and her ostrich-feathers—Reginald found himself carried on for some time in a human tide, against which it would have been vain for him to struggle, even had he had any reason to care in what direction he might be thrown. He felt quite blank and confused amidst such a rush of bowing, curtseying, nodding, whispering, simpering *great un-*

knowns—and exerted himself with all the green anxiety imaginable, not to be separated from Stukeley and Tomlinson, neither of whom, by the way, seemed to be detecting many acquaintances among this magnificent mob, any more than himself.

They were carried on by degrees, however, into another apartment, where the crowd was not quite so dense, and where, in due season, the Farce-writer detached himself in favour of a small circle of blue-stockings, which was gathered round a certain lyrical poet, who sat in an ottoman among them, with something of the air of a little Turkish Bashaw, luxuriating in the seclusion of his own harem, evidently considering every whisper of his as a compliment — every smile as a seduction. Tomlinson having associated himself to these worshippers, Stukeley and Reginald had full leisure to contemplate a real Oriental, who sat on a sofa just opposite to them, stroking, with a ring-laden hand, the finest, sleekest, blackest beard that ever imbibed quintessence of roses, and joking and laughing all the while with a single pretty woman, who sat beside him, in a style of merriment and hilarity altogether at variance with the gravity of some of his personal appendages. Our young gentlemen came near enough, after a few minutes, to hear something of the language in which this picturesque Mussulman was embodying the natural gallantry of his climate—and enough of the fair one's responses, to excite a considerable measure of surprise. The Persian was talking about his fifty wives, just as if they had been a stud of horses; and every now and then insinuating, how happy he should be to promote the Northern Belle at his elbow to a high situation in that dignified squadron of nymphs. She was rebuking him, and asking him more questions in the same breath; and altogether it was extremely visible, that the lady found something sufficiently piquant in flirting with a man, who took care to tell her every five minutes, that he did not believe she had a soul within her lovely bosom. Then came a stately Spanish Don, surrounded and followed by some enthusiasts, handsome but *passées*—and just while Reginald was intent upon the moustachios of this Member of the Junta, some one happened to tread upon his toe—"Beg your pardon, sir," quoth the culprit, turning round the moment he felt what he had done — "Why, God's mercy, Mr. Dalton!"

"Mr. Macdonald!"

"I hope you're well, sir.

Sir Charles Catline was leaning on Mr. Ralph Macdonald's arm, and having, perhaps involuntarily, turned round on hearing his companion's first exclamation, his eye met Reginald's. He bowed very quickly, and then as quickly drew himself up again; and Reginald could not help thinking that there was something of extraordinary seriousness in the expression of his face, as he said, "I am glad to see you so well, Mr. Dalton—we had heard bad accounts of your accident in the North."

"O, a mere trifle, Sir Charles. Nothing of any importance — not the least in the world."

"Your father is well, I hope, Mr. Dalton."

"Quite well, sir. I hope Lady Catline is well?"

The lady herself turned round on hearing her name, and half shutting her eyes, condescended to acknowledge our hero; but the moment afterwards, the whole of this party moved towards the dancing-room, where the musicians were now beginning to scrape their catgut, and Reginald held back, glad enough to be so easily rid of them.

After a little while, Stukeley drew him onwards, and the two young gentlemen taking their places not far from the door of the ball-room, sipped ices and contemplated the dance. Among these, Reginald's eye, ere long, detected Miss Catline, who, dressed in deep mourning, but wearing no sorrow in her eye, was going down along with young Macdonald —Thomas, the son of Ralph, the Cornet of the Blues. These young people had been somewhat in advance of the seniors of their party at the time when Reginald and old Macdonald recognised each other. Sir Charles, Lady Catline, and the Scotchman, were now seated upon the same bench, and apparently busied with the contemplation of the performances of their respective offspring. More than once Reginald's eye met Macdonald's, and also Sir Charles's, but neither of them seemed to be more desirous of further communication than he himself was.

Just as the dance was over, Lady Olivia Bampfylde swam past our Oxonians, leaning upon the arm of a very little and a very young man, extremely feeble and effeminate in his appearance, and dressed in the very height of the fashion. "'Tis her Ladyship's son," whispered Stukeley; "we are old schoolfellows, but he's grown very fine, you see." Lady Olivia, meanwhile, had advanced with her charge to the Catline party; and it was seen, from the gestures that occurred, that Mr. Bampfylde and the fair heiress were to be partners in the next dance. At the same moment, one of the Misses Bampfylde came into the room, and Stukeley solicited her hand; but Reginald, who entertained a just and modest sense of his own deficiencies, made his apology for declining an introduction which Stukeley's partner offered him to one of her fair companions. He was left, therefore, entirely by himself during this dance, and while he was surveying its evolutions, overheard some fragments of conversation that considerably interested him.

"Ah!" said a tall masculine dame immediately before him — "and so that's the Lancashire heiress they were talking of.—'Tis a new face, Colonel—what say you?"

"Ah! 'pon my soul, well enough, really. But how the girl prances!—God bless me! spirited, but rude."

"Hush, hush, Colonel. But have you heard the history? Why, she must be a cunning little affair, after all. Only see Sir Charles—that's her father, the gentleman in black, yonder. Did you ever see such a sober fellow as he looks now? I promise you, Sir Charles Catline was gay enough, however, in his time."

"Never met him before. Was he ever in Parliament, ma'am?"

"No—I don't think it. But you have not heard the story."

"Story! Is there a romance in the case. —Your ladyship can't oblige me more sensibly."

"Colonel, Colonel, you need not look so innocent—we all know you like a bit of scandal as well as any of your neighbours—but I'll gratify you for once—ay, now listen and be grateful. You see, the truth of the matter is, I really may say that I know it, for I have the story on the very best authority—Lord Grimsby, you know, just come from the north—well, the old peer assures me that this Sir Charles has been making a Methodist of himself these twenty years past, all to please a sister of his, an old maid, a Miss Something —I forget the name—but a daughter of his mother's by a former marriage—and now she's dead. And what think ye?—Why, she's passed him over, after all this work, with some paltry legacy, and left the whole estate to his daughter—ay, that girl there; and Lord Grimsby says 'tis one of the best estates in Lancashire, for a commoner's, I mean. Now, only to think of that little monkey outwitting her papa so. And just look at him again—la! how sulky 'tis."

"Ah! and this is the state of things? Well, I wish Lady Olivia success. Observe how her eye follows her son and his partner. *Entre nous*, her Ladyship's jointure leaves him but a poor Squire in the mean time. Well, I for one shall be very well pleased to see Bampfylde set on his legs."

"Legs! Bless me, Colonel, how you can couple these ideas. Was never such a strange little——"

"Hush, hush,—don't say so—a very nice little fellow—a very agreeable little fellow. You don't know what I shall make of him."

"Ah! then he's in the Coldstream, isn't he?"

"A recruit—a mere recruit, but *attendez*."

The dance was at an end, and Reginald, in the midst of the feelings which some parts of the above could not fail to excite, found himself saluted in the frankest and gayest style possible by the young Cornet of the Blues. This gentleman, having perhaps no acquaintances in the room beyond his own immediate party, seemed extremely happy to have got hold of another similarly disengaged. He put his arm in Reginald's, and, reminding him of their hasty meeting on the bridge at Oxford, inquired if he had not yet seen his father, and what news he had to give him of his old friend, the Catholic clergyman. Dalton was waiving all this as lightly as he could; but the Cornet having by this time drawn him very near to the sofa where his parent was sitting, stopped abruptly and said,—"Why, father, here's Mr. Dalton—he has only just left Oxford. He delivered your letter for me to Mr. Keith, you know, and can tell you how your friend is getting on."

Mr. Ralph bowed his head very courteously, and said,—"I fear there is no very pleasant news to be looked for."

"Mr. Keith is certainly very ill," said Reginald.

"Ay, ay," returned the Scot. "He's an old man now, sir—he's well on to fourscore."

Neither Sir Charles nor Lady Catline intimated that they were sensible of Reginald's being near them, but they were talking together, and might really not have observed him. Miss Catline came back, and resumed her seat by her mother, and old Macdonald winked to his son and hemmed, and then cast his glance obliquely significant towards the young lady. The Cornet misunderstood the old gentleman's meaning most egregiously. He instantly said, "Miss Catline, I beg to introduce Mr. Dalton."

The young lady coloured the least thing in the world, and answered, "Sorry I'm engaged next set."

Reginald, who had no wish to dance with any one, and least of all with her, retreated, however, with an air that might be mistaken for one of disappointment. He caught a glimpse of old Macdonald's countenance—it was redder than usual, and he bit his lip, and, Reginald could not but think, frowned upon the Cornet. But he had no time for pondering upon such matters. Miss Catline rose in reply to the elaborate obeisance of a Guardsman. Mr. Macdonald, junior, was introduced to a partner—the music struck up again, and all was in motion, and our hero glided back to his former corner, where he stood for near an hour, surrounded with people he knew nothing of, and hearing nothing that could interest or amuse him. He waited there only on account of Stukeley, yet he could not avoid seeing and remarking something of the only party in the room with which he had had any sort of acquaintance. Various gentlemen went up and spoke to Sir Charles in the course of the evening, but he never quitted the side of Macdonald for more than a very few minutes at a time. The Scot, on the other hand, seemed to be practising all his arts of blandishment upon Lady Catline; and young Macdonald danced with the heiress almost incessantly.

This last circumstance was apparently "*noticeable*" enough, for Reginald heard

more than one of the old ladies about him asking, "Who that young man was that danced so eternally with the Lancashire heiress?'

It was long before this question, which was put by, and to, many individuals, had the fortune to be answered by any one. At last, it was put to no less a person than the Lady Olivia Bampfylde herself, who lifted her glass to her eye, and observing the young couple, who happened to be at that moment pucetting, answered, "Oh! I protest I had forgot the name—'tis a young Scotch laird, however—a Mr. Macsomething. Mac—Mac—Macdonald, I believe."

"Ah!" said a very gay northern Thane, imitating her ladyship's gesture—"Macdonald, I dare say. I see old Glenstroan there. Yes, yes, I've seen the boy before—'tis young Glenstroan, 'pon honour."

"Young *what?* La; what a sound, my Lord."

He repeated the cacophony.

"Glenstroan!" re-echoed a sentimental pair of lips at the Thane's elbow—"well, I do so love the Scotch names. I declare they're quite lovely."

"Most musical, most melancholy!" sneered Lady Olivia Bampfylde.

"Sacrament! Your ladyship is severe," simpered he of the Hundred Hills, twirling a bunch of seals and trinkets, numerous as the roll of his baronies, multifarious as the stripes of his tartan.

"And he's a laird in good earnest—a real laird?" said Lady O——; "for, to tell you the truth, I know nothing of them but that they were brought by Sir Charles Catline."

"O, a laird, 'pon honour!—A very pretty laird!—He's a thriving old Writer to the Signet."

"And what's that?"

"Oh, just another little synonym. It means the same thing with *laird*, in the North."

"Interesting country!" interrupted the pensive girl. "How I dote upon Ossian, and the Lady of the Lake! I declare I'm quite in love."

"I declare I'm quite in love too."

"*Fie, donc*, my Lord! one can't speak even of a poem."

"One can't *think* even of a poem, you mean," and he bowed and twirled his seals again; and she smiled and twirled her fan again.

By and by supper was announced, and Reginald saw Mr. Macdonald pass with Lady Catline; the Cornet of the Blues with Miss Catline; and Sir Charles with another lady whom he did not know. He himself might scarcely have ventured, single as he was, to follow the now descending stream, had not Stukeley, who happened to have no fair one on his hands at the moment, joined him, and represented the folly of enduring the squeeze, and yet missing the champagne. Reginald and he, therefore, followed the rest to one of the apartments (for there were several of them), in which supper-tables were prepared, and getting into a corner by themselves, these Oxonians, it may easily be supposed, were at no loss to console themselves for the want of partners. In a word, they both drank a good deal, and sallied out afterwards in a state of considerable elevation.

The blaze of flambeaus about the door was such, that everything could be seen as distinctly as if it had been noon-day. Just as they were about to touch the street, there arose a cry of dismay—the horses in a carriage had taken fright, and were rearing and flinging furiously—women from within screamed—chairmen and lackeys of every hue roared, cursed, and scrambled. The horses made a violent effort, and sprung forward with such fury, that the coachman lost his balance, and fell upon the street, luckily clearing, and just clearing, the wheels. Stukeley and Reginald leapt forward at the same moment—the former, being jostled by some of the footmen, was left behind—the latter cleared everything at a bound, rushed on with frantic energy—pursued for half a hundred yards at the same mad rate—overtook, and, dextrously seizing the bridle close by the jaw, was dragged on for a minute, and finally checked and stopped the horses' flight of terror by the mere weight of his person. Ere he knew he had succeeded, the carriage-door was flung open. Released by the arrival of a score of lackeys and coachmen from his post, he looked round—and saw—the Catlines and the Macdonalds.

He would gladly have escaped their notice—but escape was impossible on either side; and, before there was the least time for reflection, he had heard thanks, acknowledgments, apologies, regrets, and commendations from every pair of lips that he had rescued. I shall not deny, that Reginald enjoyed at that moment a certain cold and scornful pleasure. The serious and substantial injuries of the Catlines, he by this time merely despised;—the visible coldness—perhaps contempt—with which they had presumed to treat him that evening, was fresh on his fancy. He returned bow by bow, and smile by smile, and inquired, and feared, and hoped—all with an elaborate composure of civility, which deceived not *one*, whomsoever it might deceive.

All this, however, was the work of an instant. A gentleman, whose chariot was in attendance, insisted on Sir Charles making use of it for himself and his ladies, returning into the house until it should have set them down. In a word, Reginald found himself left on the street, with Stukeley and the two Macdonalds; and, after a little pause—"And whereabouts," said the elder Scot, "are ye bound for? for us, we're in the Barracks."

"The barracks?—what barracks?" said Stukeley.

"The Scotch Barracks, to be sure. Ye ken what I mean, sauf us—Suffolk-street."

"Oh! that little place by Charing-Cross?"

"The same—and let me tell you, it's a very convenient bit—near the public offices—near Paurliament—near the Coorts o' Law, if ye hae business—no far frae the theatres, if ye're for pleesure—and a moderate place—dacent landleddies—and the best o' company—I was just coontin' this morning, and i've eleven cousins there presently; and there's five captains o' companies, and three field-officers, amang them."

"Well," said Stukeley, "'tis all in my way, Dalton will go so far with us, and I roost in the Temple."

Old Macdonald with this took hold of one of Reginald's arms, and they all walked on, talking merrily together about the ball, and so forth, till they were near the bottom of the Hay-market.—"Weel, lads," said Ralph, as they were passing the window of a fishmonger's shop—"Weel, lads, the very deevil's i' this sharp morning air, I believe—Od! I'm as yaup as if I had not broken bread since breakfast, Thomas—Gentlemen, gentlemen, just look at that cut o' saumon—that's nane o' your fushionless Tweed lads, or I'm meikle mista'en—Na, nor it's no Tay saumon neither—it's as far north as Fochabers, by the marled face o't—or maybe it's frae some o' the Thane's waters—Just look till't—it might mak a minister's mouth water—And look at thae oysters—saw ye ever sic braw chiels—perfect jewels, as I'm a Christian soul!—Come awa, come awa, what signifies talking?—we'll be nane the worse of a wheen o' thae same oysters, and a drap warm toddy after them—and as for you, Maister Dalton, I'm sure ye're weel deserving o' a treat, for a' the trouble ye had stopping yon daft beasts, that were just demented, I believe, with the glaring o' sae mony flambeaux; for Sir Charles's cattle have had little experience o' towns, ye ken. Come awa, come awa—yon champagne's grown cauld about my heart, I believe. I'se warrant, they'll hae some Hollands hereawa; for as to whisky, that's clean havers to spear aboot it."

Reginald had perceived, long ere this, that Lady Olivia's champagne, however it might be decried, had done its duty in tolerable style upon the stout brain of Mr. Ralph. To say truth, he had also remarked the evident change which Mr. Macdonald's demeanour towards himself had undergone, since his parting with the Catlines; and before that time, he had heard more than enough to stimulate, and he was now willing, if possible, to gratify his curiosity; as for Stukeley, "variety is charming" was his motto; and, in short, the Laird of Glenstroan's motion was carried *nem. con.*

CHAPTER XLIV.

A QUARTETTE.

THEY entered, and were forthwith ushered into a snug little refectory, where one and all of them failed not to exhibit the potency of that supererogatory, but still superlative appetite, which Dr. Kitchener so classically denominates "the *devil*-twist." Some half dozen pots of porter, and more than as many dozen of prime natives, being discussed, a bowl was called for, and a lively mixture of blue ruin, hot water, sugar, and nutmegs, compounded under the auspices of the old Celt. In short, all the cold formal restraints, under which Glenstroan had been suffering beneath Lady Olivia's painted roofs and resplendent chandeliers, were in a twinkling as much forgotten, as if Hanover-square had been situated in the other hemisphere; and, *inter alia*, a colloquy of this sort graced the board.

"Here, here," quoth Macdonald—"put in your glasses again, I say, lads.—And this is vacans time wi' you, I suppose, Mr. Dalton?"

"Vacans? I beg your pardon."

"Ay, vacans—the college is no sitting, or you would not be stravaiging about Lunnun."

"The truth is," says Reginald, "that I have left Oxford for ever, Mr. Macdonald. An unfortunate affair——"

"O, is that the way o't?—Sir Charles was speaking aboot that too—and ye've gotten your mittimus for your pains? Od, if young folk will be sae daft as to blow each other's brains out—I cannot say but you're cheap o't, for that matter—but I'm very sorry, ne'ertheless—very sorry indeed for you, Mr. Dalton."

"Nay, sir, you will be happy to learn, if you did not hear it before, that no very serious consequences are to be lamented—I mean, serious in the sense you seem to be thinking of. The only thing is, that we have all been expelled from the University."

"An' how could you look for less, man?—Why, what could a wheen big-wigged ministers say to sic like? I'm clear ye're well deserving of what you've gotten—but I'm sorry—very sorry for't.—Put in your glasses there—and what are ye doing here now?"

"I am going out to India soon, sir—and I am here studying the languages in the mean time."

"India?—Ay, that's a braw field, man, if ye but buckle till't.—There's my cousin Æneas come home just now—no meikle turned o' forty, I believe, and realeezed a very handsome thing—they say, he's like to buy back Drumshargielaws again. What think ye o' the like o' that, sirs?"

"Well, sir, I hope to have some success too; and perhaps we may meet hereafter."

"Gie me great pleasure, Mr. Dalton—and let me tell ye, ye'll enjoy a fortune o' your ain making, man, far mair than ye could have

done any other sort of one. As the sang says—

> 'O, the gear that is gifted, is never
> Sae sweet as the gear that is won.'

Na, it's nae sang, neither—there's mysel, now—just look to mysel—when I began the warld, what was I?—What good did a' the bluid of Somerled of the Isles, and Red-handed Donald, and a' the lave o' them, do me? Na, na, I was a bare-legged gentleman at the best—but I worked, Mr. Dalton, I worked—I worked hard, late and early I was at it—and now—it's no my way to blaw big aboot mysel—but in the course of thirty years, what have I done? Have I no gotten all Glenstroan, sir?—five-and-twenty miles in a streetch—some o' the bonniest sheep-walks in a' the county o' Ross—a hill, sir, a mountain, sir—there's no the like o't in all England—a real mountain, sir, and as mony black stots on't as would keep Buonaparte in beef for—I'se no say how lang. Saumon fishings—twa hundred a-year upon only ae tack—a home farm that could stand aside the best o' Berwickshire—ay, and at the back of a' this, a business, that's weel worth't a' three times ower—a business, sir, that was a seen fortune to ony man, though that gowk there—ay, just himsel—wad rather, forsooth, have a blue jacket and a cocked-hat, and a wheen mair idle whigmaleeries; but what signifies speaking? The Cornet! od keep us a'!—isna the very sound o't enough?—the Cornet—the Cornet o' the Blues!—awa' wi' ye, ye silly haverel!—but put in your glass though, Tam, for a' that."

"Come, come now, sir," said Reginald, "you are a little too hard upon the Cornet. I dare say, you'll have great pleasure when you see him on horseback with his troop. I assure you, he both rides and looks most admirably."

"There's naething wrang wi' the outside o' him—he's weel built, Mr. Dalton; so are you yoursel, for that matter—but what a daft-like doing was yon, man—quarrelling and feghtin about a worthless, useless, foul baggage? Oh fie, Mr. Dalton—and you a minister's son, too!—honest man, it wad be a sair heart to him, I'se warrant."

"I am sorry you have recurred to the subject, sir; but, since you have done so, I must tell you that I don't sit here to listen to any such language as this—and least of all from *you*, sir."

"From *me*, sir—What's your meaning?"

"Yes, from you, sir—the unfortunate young lady you have alluded to——"

"Young lady!—God a-mercy—is the lad demented?—Did we not see't in the papers?—some common light-skirts!"

"Hold, sir!—but I am wrong—you are ignorant of the fact. Know, sir, that the young lady you allude to was no other than Miss Hesketh."

"Miss Hesketh!—Mr. Keith's niece?—Are ye serious?"

"Perfectly serious—and I hope, now you have heard me, you will be serious too."

The old Scotchman complied most rigidly with the last request—the moment he heard Reginald's explanation, his countenance, tipsy as he was, underwent a total change. He bit his lip, thrust his hand into his bosom, and eyed alternately his son and our hero, with glances indicative of some disturbance within.

"You seem astonished," said Reginald, after a pause; "and yet, considering the interest you take in Mr. Keith's affairs, my only wonder is that you should not have had some hint of all this before."

"The interest that *I* take in *his* affairs, young gentleman!—I assure you I have a very great regard for Archy Keith, and I am always very happy to hear of him, and his being well; but I've heard nothing o' him for a long while, and indeed we've never been much in the habits of corresponding."

"Of late, sir, Mr. Keith has been incapable of corresponding with anybody; he is ill, very ill—I have no doubt he is dying—I believe I told you so before. But Sir Charles Catline——"

"Sir Charles Catline!—What, in God's name, has *he* ado wi' Archy Keith?—Ha! ha!"

"I only meant to say, sir, that you were occupied with Sir Charles Catline, and seemed scarcely to hear what I said of the old gentleman's health, when we were at Lady Olivia Bampfylde's."

"Ay, ay, I understand; but I say, Mr. Dalton—but indeed I dare say ye'll know nothing of the matter—but however, it may be so—do you happen to know anything of what's like to become of this lassie of his, in case of his demise?—But nonsense, nonsense; how could you hear onything about it?"

"I have heard it hinted," answered Reginald, "that Miss Hesketh will probably reside in one of the Yorkshire nunneries; but you should know better, sir. Her relations——"

"Her relations!—What are ye at?"

"I mean to say, that Miss Hesketh's other relations will no doubt show every attention to Miss Hesketh——"

"O, ay. Really, Mr. Dalton, these are things I cannot pretend to speak about. If the war were over, I dare say, from what I've heard, the young leddy would be for Germany again. Keith aye said that; he aye said she was attached beyond measure to that country."

"I believe she is, sir; but the war, you see, is not very like drawing to a close."

"No; how should it?—How should the war draw to a close?"

"And why not?" said Stukeley, who had been dozing a little.

"Not till I have seen a little of it, I hope," said the Cornet.

"Hold your silly tongue, Tam," quoth the father; "you don't know what side your bread's buttered on, you haverel—you, ye gowk! But it's weel for you ye had a father afore ye. You! if ye had come up from Strathspey, as I did, whare wad ye hae been at my time o' day? Answer me that, Tam—answer me that."

"Come," said Stukeley, "we must all admit that our friend, the Cornet, is a fortunate fellow. Thirty miles on end, I think you said, Mr. Macdonald."

"Not an acre less, Mr. Stukeley. I wish ye would come down and try the trampling o't some harvest. Oh, man, if ye be fond of sport, we could let ye see what sport is. Paitricks, grouse, ptarmigan, snipes, woodcocks, wild-ducks, ay, and wild-geese too; rowth o' them a', and fishing. Hoots, hoots, there's neither fishing nor shooting in your country."

"Well, Dalton," said Stukeley, turning to our hero, "I'll make your old Hall my halfway house—that is, if you take my advice, which I am sure will be our friend Mr. Macdonald's advice also, and make a few pretty speeches to this young lady."

"Young lady!—What young lady?" cries Glenstroan.

"What young lady should I mean," replied Stukeley, "but *the* young lady—the young lady that has got his land—the land that should have been his—into her hands—the young lady that, like a silly fellow as he is, he didn't dance with this whole evening?"

"Eh!—What's your drift?"

"Miss Catline—that Lancashire baronet's pretty daughter, that may now be considered pretty sure, I suppose, of being heiress to all those acres of the old Daltons. The knight has no son, has he?"

"And what if he had fifty sons?" says Macdonald, rather sneeringly.

"Why, then," cried Stukeley, "I take it the Miss would be rather less worth looking after—that's all."

"It may be doubted," returns Macdonald.

"Why, what may be doubted, Mr. Macdonald? She's a comely enough girl; but if she had not the acres?"

"But she *has* the acres—she *has* them—they're her own—they're as meikle hers as Glenstroan's mine."

"Ay, just so—that's just what I was saying, Mr. Macdonald; and this is just the reason why I was tipping Reginald Dalton here a little bit of a dodge. Up, man, Reginald;—but you're a poor hand at that work. Why, if I had been in your shoes, I should have waltzed her off her feet ere I had done wi' her."

"Have done, have done," says Reginald.—"You know you are talking mere stuff—you know you are—you know my feelings."

"I honour your feelings, sir," cries old Macdonald, seizing our hero by the hand. "I honour your feelings heartily, Mr. Dalton—there's the gentleman's spirit in you, sir. You speak like a gentleman, and to the backbone. I see't in your face, sir. Ye would scorn to be beholden to ony petticoat for your subsistence—ye've a spirit aboon the like o' that. I applaud and honour your spirit, Mr. Dalton—here's to you, my braw young man, and may ye come back wi' a meal sack fu' o' rupees!"

"Well, d—n me," cried Stukeley, catching warmth from the Scot's energy, "I'll be hanged if I see what all this mighty fuss is about. Isn't it a much better thing to hang up one's hat in one's own forefathers' house, and eat Lancashire mutton at one's own forefathers' fireside, than to go and be broiled among the Sepoys for half one's life, and come back with never so many rupees, and a face as yellow as their gold—and the liver—and God knows what, besides—cholera morbus—rainy season—Pindarees. Come, come, Reginald, stick to the heiress. Mind your hits better when you have the next opportunity."

"O Lord!" cries the Laird of Glenstroan, "What will this world come to? Did ye no hear him, Mr. Stukeley? Did ye no hear the noble and honourable sentiments he was just expressing? For shame—for shame, Mr. Stukeley!—I'm really concerned to hear the way you speak. I'll say't ance again—a man cannot do a meaner thing than to gang snuffing after heiresses—in certain situations, I mean."

"In what situations?" cries Stukeley.

"Yes, father, in what situations?" quoth the Cornet of the Blues.

"In what situations? And is't you, too, that's putting sic a question, Thomas Macdonald? But I'll tell you what it is, Mr. Stukeley—and I'm not going to say onything but what everybody of common discretion will uphold me in.—I look upon it as but a dirty like thing for ony man, be he what he may, to court a woman without being able to make decent settlements. And it's there that my good young friend Mr. Dalton and me are just of the same way of thinking. Od, sirs, put it to yoursell, Mr. Stukeley, could ye now, speak out like a man, could ye really thole the idea of no being master in your own house?"

"By Jupiter, I don't see your dritt, Mr. Macdonald! Make the house my own, and the devil a doubt but I shall be master in it."

"Ye're green, ye're green at the best. If one squire or laird, or the heir-apparent of one squire or laird, marries a young lady that has either the prospect, or maybe the property, of a braw estate, why, that's a' right and tight—that's just as it should be; there's nobody but a born gowk would say ought against that. How could he? But, plague

on't, I'm just pleasuring ye, Mr. Stukeley—ye have the same mind wi' mysell—I see't in your face—ye're only taking your daffin aff me, a' this while. But as for you, Thomas——"

"Me, father!"

"Ay, me, father. I'll tell you what it is, Tam, my man, since ever ye got me wiled into this daft-like havers o' letting ye hae your ain fancy about these Blues, forsooth, and turn your back upon the business that has made you—that has made you, sir—ye think ye may e'en say and do what you like; but ye'se find a difference, that ye shall, or my name's not Ralph Macdonald."

"Lord bless me!" says Reginald, "you are really getting too hot upon us, Mr. Macdonald. Our friend, the Cornet, said nothing at all."

"Ye ken nothing about what our friend the Cornet said, Mr. Dalton. He kens himsell what I mean—he kens that brawly, though he *may* put on that staring face. Hoot, you tawpie—will ye never learn to be a man o' sense?—But what signifies talking, talking? Gae awa, gae awa—In wi' your glasses, lads—there's a sup mair in the bowl yet."

"Well," says Stukeley, "suppose we have a toast. I beg to propose the young lady we've been speaking so much about. Fill a bumper. Miss Catline!"

"Weel," says Ralph, "that's a toast that there'll none of us object to, I'm sure—here, Tom, what are you doing wi' your glass, callant?—Ay, now, that will do.—Here's to Miss Catline of Grypherwast and Little Pyesworth."

"And a good husband to her, Mr. Macdonald," says Stukeley.

"Wi' a' my heart—a good man till her. She'll be meikle the better o' that—and a sensible man, Mr. Stukeley. Oh! I wish she had a sensible man."

"I wish to God she had," says the Cornet.

"*Ye* wish to God!" says the sire, with an intolerable sneer—"ye dinna ken what's the meaning of a sensible man, Thomas. But what signifies lecturing? A body cannot baith ring the bell and walk in the procession. Ken ye the English o' that, Tam, my bairn?"

"Upon my word," says Stukeley, who seemed to have been musing, "I should be nothing surprised if Lady Olivia made her point good after all. I heard several people remark to-night what attention she paid to this same heiress, and her son's estate has great need, that I well know, of some little coopering. She's a sly hand—many a queer story I've heard my mother tell. There were all her nieces—what fine marriages she contrived to get for them. And Bampfylde has, after all, the first connections. It would be a marriage that nobody could say anything against."

"What!" roars Macdonald—"yon poor shaughlin' in-kneed bit scray of a thing! Would ony Christian body even yon bit object to a bonny sonsy weel-faured young woman like Miss Catline? I declare, the very thought o't's enough to make one sick. Yon ane? Why, he has nae mair calf to his leg than a greyhound—And sic a whey face!—a perfect nirl! as I sall answer. I've seen as boardly a chiel in a glass bottle upon a doctor's shelf. Hoots! hoots! that will never do."

"Why, it must be owned," says Reginald, "Mr. Bampfylde has not much either of the Hercules or the Apollo about him."

"The Hercules or the Apollo! He has mair o' the Finnan haddock, or the sperling, I think—he, he, he!—And his head! poor creature, it looks as if it were ower heavy for the backbone o't. And you, Tom, what gars you slouch down your head that gait? Haud yourself up, man—haud yourself up, I say. Ane might look for *that* frae a Cornet, I think. But what hours will't be? As I sall answer, 'tis well on to four in the morning, and my appeal ordered for the morn! Come, come, gentlemen, we'll just buzz a' round, and pay the lawin," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XLV.

MR. WARD ACQUITS THE CATLINES.

WHEN Reginald came down to the breakfast-parlour that morning, there was a good deal of lassitude and paleness about his appearance, and Mr. Ward told him, with a good-humoured smile, that it was sufficiently evident he had been guilty of some debauch. Our hero gave him, in return, an account of all the transactions of the evening, not omitting his rencontre with the Catlines and the Macdonalds, which last family he described as being old friends and allies, though how he knew not, of Sir Charles. Mr. Ward seemed to be rather curious in the inquiries he made—above all, touching the appearance, manners, and deportment of Miss Catline; as to all which matters Reginald gave him as much satisfaction as he had in his power.

The postman came round that way while they were lounging over their coffee, and Reginald had the pleasure to receive the long looked-for letter from his father. Various packets were at the same time laid before Mr. Ward, and they both occupied themselves for a considerable time in reading.

The Vicar told his son that his delay in writing had been occasioned by his having a great deal to do in regard to Mrs. Elizabeth. The old lady had, immediately after her niece's funeral, removed herself into the town of Lancaster, and taken up her abode there under the roof of an ancient dowager of her acquaintance. He, however, had waited upon Mrs. Elizabeth as soon as he knew the place

of her retreat, and his kind offer having been as kindly accepted, the old lady had accompanied him over the Sands, and was now established in the Vicarage of Lannwell, "where," said the Vicar, "after the present irritation of her feelings shall have subsided, I have no doubt her company will be a great pleasure and consolation to me in my otherwise solitary habitation."

The Vicar then entered at considerable length into the details of that history of which Reginald had picked up some scattered hints and fragments in the course of the preceding day. Very great surprise, he said, had been excited all over that part of the country, when the contents of Miss Dalton's will were made public, which, however, they were not until several days after the funeral. Nobody had been more surprised than Mrs. Elizabeth, and yet it was from her lips, and from them alone, that, after reflection had restored her calmness, the Vicar had been able to obtain any sort of insight as to the means by which Miss Dalton must have apparently been worked upon ere she made that arrangement, which every one now agreed in considering as so strange and unnatural for a person in her situation.

Instead, however, of detailing Mrs. Elizabeth's conjectures, we shall take this opportunity of very briefly introducing the reader to the real state of the case.

The truth is, that a very great variety of circumstances had combined in their operation upon Miss Dalton's enervated and irresolute understanding. She was much attached to her brother, but his daughter was still dearer to her; and knowing, as she did, that he was not fond of his wife, she judged it far from improbable that he might be married again and have a son. Besides, Sir Charles himself had sent his daughter to live at Grypherwast, and Miss Barbara was always at her aunt's elbow. Thirdly, Mrs. Elizabeth had contrived to produce *some* suspicious effects on Miss Dalton's mind, by narrating a certain story which she herself had once heard something of from the Vicar of Lannwell; and indeed the good old lady had perhaps overstepped not a little the limits of prudence and propriety, by alluding to some particulars connected with that story, in the presence of the Baronet himself.

But why dissect the workings of a weak hesitating mind, ever ready to lean for support of every kind upon that which happened to be nearest? Miss Catline was an extremely artful girl, and in the course of the eight long months during which she shared Miss Dalton's privacy—and there was no hour of the four-and-twenty in which she did not share it—such was in one way or other the result. Miss Dalton sent for an attorney from a distance; the draught of a will conveying Grypherwast not to Sir Charles, but to Sir Charles's eldest daughter, was executed, and although the lady was carried off rather suddenly in the end, her signature had been affixed to the document.

These circumstances may account sufficiently for the shade of disappointment, which, according to Squire Dawkins, every one remarked on Sir Charles's brow, immediately after the death of his sister; as also for certain particulars already described in his deportment at that unfortunate lady's funeral. But whatever might have been the measure of his resentment at the moment, the Vicar informed Reginald that the outward show of it had soon passed away from him. The whole family had, it seemed, left Lancashire together; they had left it, to all appearance, in the most perfect cordiality with each other; and the neighbours had been uniformly informed that the journey was undertaken entirely on account of the young heiress's health, which it was easily believed had suffered in consequence of her very long and strict attendance upon the poor sickly lady that was no more.

Reginald, the sound of Lady Olivia's fiddles yet buzzing in his ear, smiled not a little when he came to the paragraph in which this last piece of intelligence was conveyed by the good Vicar. Mr. Ward asked what it was that amused him so much, and the young gentleman answered by handing his father's letter across the table to him.

Mr. Ward said nothing for some moments after he had done with the letter; at length he folded it into its cover, and handing it back to Reginald, said, "Well, my young friend, there is some very strange news here; but, to tell you the truth, I have just been reading a letter which conveyed to myself pretty much the same information. It is from Mrs. Elizabeth Dalton, who, by the way, seems to be one of the kindest and worthiest old souls; and indeed, as for you, Reginald, if she had been your own mother, she could not have spoken more tenderly about you."

"I well know her kindness, sir," says Reginald.

"Yes, I know you do; and here, read her letter for yourself. And yet I really don't know whether I ought to show it you, my young friend; it contains something that is most probably new to you, and if so, will give you pain. Did you ever hear anything about what happened long ago between your father and Miss Dalton?"

"Miss Dalton?—O yes, sir," said Reginald, colouring like a girl; "my father told me the whole story himself two years ago."

"Ah! did he so?—Well, then, read the letter; for upon my word I wish to hear what you think."

Reginald read a long and most tender epistle, which contained Mrs. Elizabeth's narrative of the same events which the Vicar had communicated to himself—her lamentations over the fate of her family possessions—

her bitter lamentation over the Vicar of Lannwell's juvenile rashness in regard to his cousin, to which the old lady seemed to have no hesitation in attributing the whole of the disastrous incidents that had followed. It included, however, as might have been expected, sundry very keen and sarcastic reflections touching the Catlines; but the theme it began and ended with was Reginald—her gratitude for Mr. Ward's conduct towards him—her prayers for his ultimate welfare.

"There's some prosing towards the end of it," said Ward, "that you need not trouble yourself with. Well, you've read it all, however, I see; and now tell me seriously what is your impression."

"Why, really, Mr. Ward, I don't very well know how to answer that question. You can't expect me to say that I approve of what Miss Dalton has done, still less of what the Catlines have done."

"Indeed, my dear young friend," said Ward, "'tis extremely natural for you to feel and to speak so. I confess at first I was sufficiently inclined to be of the same way of thinking myself; but really, when one looks a little longer at the whole circumstances of the case, why, I shall not conceal that I do think we have both been somewhat hasty."

"Hasty, Mr. Ward?—I hope I said nothing that could be interpreted harshly about any one."

"No, no, my dear fellow; and yet if you had, I should have been the last to blame you. But listen to me, Reginald: I confess that I, for one, had been inclined to think very severely indeed of Sir Charles Catline; and yet, now that the whole affair is out, why, after all, you see Miss Dalton has passed him entirely over. Upon my word, I can't help saying that Sir Charles must be acquitted. Nobody can believe that if Miss Dalton had acted under his influence, he, a man in the prime of his life, would or could have recommended such a will as this. Why, a man may love his daughter never so well, but why have himself omitted?—And then consider, what's to hinder him to lose his wife, marry again (I don't believe he's five-and-forty yet), and have a son?—No, no—depend on't, Miss Dalton's will was of her own fancying—that unfortunate story of her and the Vicar!—Good God, what effects these things will produce!—a weak-minded creature, Reginald—subject to strange whims, no doubt; but at all events I acquit Catline — from my soul I acquit him — I thought otherwise, and 'tis but justice to speak my mind now."

"And Miss Catline?"

"Ay, indeed—there there's more difficulty; and yet when one considers it, Reginald, she's but a girl of seventeen—always brought up in her father's house—no quarrels—quite the contrary, it would appear. There is, to be sure, no getting to the bottom of such things; but I confess I think it possible, ay, more than possible, even probable, indeed I do, that this young lady is just as innocent as her father. It would be such art, such consummate art, I really can't attribute it to so young a creature, without very different sort of evidence from what our good friend Mrs. Betty seems to rely on—I can't, for my life, think of it. No, Reginald; the more I weigh everything, the more do I feel impressed that the poor lady's resentment against your worthy father has been at the root of the whole misfortune."

"Well, sir," says Reginald, "it may be so; I hope it is so. But, at all events, the subject cannot be a pleasant one, and I hope you will totally drop it. As for myself, I can only say, that both Sir Charles and his family seemed to treat me as coldly as might be at Lady Bampfylde's."

"Come now, Reginald, says the old man, smiling, "might it not be so, after all, that your own looks set the example? You have told me that you heard some hints about the will in the course of the evening; and before you went, you knew enough of it to be aware that Grypherwast had gone away from the Daltons; confess that, under all circumstances, you might be likely enough, even without meaning it, to throw a little acidity into your countenance; and, besides, are we to allow nothing for what they might feel, even innocent, and conscious of innocence, in being suddenly thrown into contact with one, who, they might so naturally suppose, was likely to think hardly of them? It is not so easy, I assure you, to tell the difference sometimes between the blush of conscious guilt, and that of innocence conscious of suspicion."

"Well, sir, I can't argue with you,—once more, I am most willing to hope the best."

"Yes, my dear boy, and to *believe* the best —we must never put harsh constructions—God knows we may all be subjected to them often enough in our turn."

Their conversation was interrupted at this point, by a visit of Mr. Chisney of Thorwold, who, having asked for both of them, was ushered into the room where they were sitting together. Mr. Chisney had had occasion to form a little acquaintance with Mr. Ward during the days they both spent in Oxford; the one in attendance upon his brother's sick-bed, the other on our imprisoned young gentleman. As for Reginald, we have no need to say that the Squire of Thorwold entertained a very affectionate regard for him, and had done so for a long time. That feeling had certainly sustained no diminution in consequence of the unfortunate fracas between Reginald and his brother; on the contrary, knowing and lamenting that that occurrence had originated in Frederick's fault, and in his alone, Mr. Chisney could not reflect without the deepest pain on the idea, that an innocent youth's fortunes and fate had undergone a total change in consequence of his brother's un-

justifiable behaviour, and this worthy man was most anxious to do whatever might be in his power for Reginald—to serve him if he could—at all events, to show him the utmost kindness and attention. Frederick Chisney himself had arrived from Oxford, almost entirely re-established. The Squire came now to repeat, in his name, the expression of that regret and humility which he had himself avowed to Reginald in Christ-Church—to express his own hope that the two young men would now meet on terms of friendliness, without making any further allusion to what had passed—and, in a word, to invite Mr. Ward and Reginald to come and dine with him next day in Grafton Street.

Our hero, who really had a great respect and affection for both Mr. Chisney and his wife, and who had banished from his breast almost every trace of angry feeling towards Frederick, made no objection to this arrangement, which he at once saw was very agreeable to Mr. Ward.

Reginald was called away to attend upon his Persic Master, but Mr. Chisney not only remained for a considerable time afterwards with Mr. Ward, but in the end walked out with him.

The truth is, that Reginald's kind old friend had, ere then, given Mr. Chisney a full explanation of all those matters concerning which himself and Reginald had previously been conversing. Mr. Chisney, who had as yet heard no particular account of Miss Dalton's will, was astonished not a little when he found what was the real state of the affair. He also had been sufficiently inclined to attribute conduct of by no means the most honourable kind to Sir Charles Catline; but now he was not slow to embrace the more favourable opinion which Mr. Ward had taken up, and which, whatever might be the truth, was, we must admit, by no means an unfair induction from the facts to which Mr. Ward's information extended.

Perceiving that Mr. Chisney completely entered into these charitable views of his, old Ward proceeded at first, in a merely jocular way, to hint that it was a thousand pities their young friend could not marry Miss Catline, and so relieve himself at once from all worldly troubles, and at the same time re-establish the line of Dalton in their old and rightful inheritance. Mr. Chisney took up this notion with a degree of warmth even beyond what Ward could have expected—ran over all Reginald's amiable qualifications in an exulting tone—swore that if Sir Charles Catline had one spark of honourable feeling in his heart, *that* would be the one match which, above all the alliances of princes, he would covet for his daughter—that Miss Catline should be, would be, could be, must be—nobody's but Reginald's.

In fine, these two gentlemen made it their first business to discover where the Catlines had taken up their residence; and then went both together, and waited upon Sir Charles and the ladies. In the course of conversation, Mr. Ward was at pains to drop such delicate hints, as he thought he might venture on—just enough to convey to Sir Charles the impression, that the old gentleman entirely acquitted him of having used any unfair practices in regard to Grypherwast. Lightly and superficially as all this was done, Mr. Ward could not be deceived concerning the effect which the thing produced on Sir Charles. A certain embarrassment, which had hung about his air, seemed to be dispelled; and, among other matters, hearing Ward mention that Reginald Dalton was living under his roof, he took occasion to make some inquiries as to the state of that young gentleman's affairs and prospects, in a tone of interest which conveyed no trivial satisfaction into the bosoms of both his friends.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A BEVY OF BEAUX.

FROM this time, for the greater part of a month, Reginald passed a life of more external gaiety than he had ever before been accustomed to. This mode of existence was far from being what he would have adopted, had the choice been left to himself; but Mr. Ward, his friend, his guardian, his host, omitted nothing that might tend to involve him more and more in the stream; and the deference he felt towards the person whose paternal kindness had been so distinguished, would not have permitted him to act otherwise than he did, even had there been no other motives to come in aid of his very perceptible inclinations, and indeed his occasional suggestions.

Far, however, as Reginald was from entering into any of those views which we have seen Mr. Ward, and even Mr. Chisney of Thorwold, considered as so reasonable and so desirable—far as he was from ever even dreaming of adding himself to the troop of young suitors with whom he soon found Miss Catline was continually surrounded, it must not be denied, nor perhaps will it seem at all surprising, that he really sought and derived some amusement from observing the manner in which this heiress comported herself in the midst of the multifarious flatteries and adulations that everywhere waited upon her steps. The kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Chisney was scarcely less indefatigable than that of Mr. Ward himself, in contriving opportunities, which, for whatever ends they might be designed, in effect served only for the gratification of the (on the whole) innocent curiosity which we have alluded to. In a word, in one way or another, Reginald now found himself

almost constantly in the society of the very family which, but a few days before, he had thought it impossible he should ever have any communication with. Dinner followed on dinner—rout on rout—concert on concert—ball on ball. And wherever he went, with scarcely one exception, he met Sir Charles and Lady Catline, and the fair young Lady of Grypherwast.

Barbara Catline was certainly a very pretty girl. She had smart blue eyes, a profusion of very rich light-brown hair, a bright complexion, and a neat figure. When Reginald first saw her in the country, her air wore a certain tinge of the sombre, and her dress was almost as punctiliously devoid of ornament as that of the aunt, whose fancies she so skilfully copied in regard to matters of higher importance than this. But now, although she was in the deepest mourning, it was easy to see that she had neglected nothing of all those artifices by which the skill of millinery has been able to achieve its triumph over sable itself. In every respect, she had the appearance of being accoutred in the most fashionable style. Her manners, too, had lost almost every trace of the old demureness. They exhibited, if not the unfettered exuberance of animal spirits, the boldness, certainly, and easy assurance of one that felt and knew the value of her independent wealth. Neither did Miss Catline seem to have the least objection to flirtation; on the contrary, numerous as her admirers were, she appeared to have a stock of smiles sufficient for the accommodation of them all. Even on Reginald himself, after frequent meetings had improved their acquaintance, she condescended to bestow abundant little marks of favour, which, had he been neither pre-engaged nor prejudiced, might perhaps have been prized more highly than they were now likely to be. But, being himself out of the question, his eyes were at the service of others, and, acute as they were, they were really quite inadequate to the task which he had assigned them. At times, he thought Mr. Bampfylde, aided as he was by the unwearied Lady Olivia's blandishments, might, after all, persuade her to overlook all the defects of his person. At other times, he could not help auguring favourably for the designs which, as it was extremely apparent from the beginning, the Laird of Glenstroan entertained in behalf of his son the Cornet—designs which, from more than one little circumstance, Reginald conceived to be by no means disagreeable in the eyes of Sir Charles himself. There were moments also in which he thought it far from impossible that Frederick Chisney might be the happy man. But Mr. Collins, the curate, had come to London with the family in quality of chaplain, and perhaps recollecting, as he did, something that he had once had occasion to remark at Grypherwast, it was no wonder that in spite of the uniform gravity and priest-like reserve of this person's manners, Reginald's most prevailing fancy was, that the calmness and serenity of promised felicity sat in his decorous and unsuspected eye.

Collins and Frederick Chisney, if they were suitors, were quiet and unobtrusive ones. Mr. Bampfylde, on the other hand, was a noisy, empty little fellow, extravagantly conceited of himself, his rank, even his person, and, worst of all, even of his wit. He giggled and smirked eternally, and could no more conceal the least of all the pretty fancies that were floating on his mind, than express any one of them in a manner at all suited to make any impression on a clever girl, who entertained a sufficiently lofty opinion of herself. He had, however, as we have seen, an able and active coadjutrix. Lady Olivia was a woman of rank and fashion—Miss Catline was, comparatively speaking, an unpractised rustic; and who should say what might be the result of her son's qualifications, however slender in themselves, backed as they were by all the arts of such a knowing and imposing personage as this?——Nothing, we all know, awes a young aspirant, above all a female one, so much as easy and undisputed *ton*.

Old Ralph Macdonald was, in his own style, quite as indefatigable as Lady Olivia Bampfylde was in hers. The son, who was a good-looking young man, but rather, it must be admitted, a little too much tinged with *mauvaise honte*, did not appear, to Reginald at least, to be at all so diligent in the prosecution of his suit, as his father was in aiding it by such arts and attentions as lay within his power, or rather as were consistent with the economy of his imagination. The old Scot never approached Miss Catline without a smile of the most seductive and fascinating blandness; he never uttered a sentence to her, without concluding it with a whisper of compliment; when he eyed her from a distant part of the room, there was a most picturesque mixture of admiration, triumph, and exultation in his long and steadfast glance. If anybody spoke to him while he was thus occupied, he started with the air of one that has been disturbed in the most charming of reveries—answered shortly whatever interrogative had been addressed to him—took a threefold pinch of snuff, and resumed his gaze of delight. Often, in the course of these gay weeks, did Reginald, altogether unintentionally on his part, overhear the exhortations which old Glenstroan poured into young Glenstroan's ear,—"Faint heart never won fair lady," was the burden of his everlasting song. Even when his son was not at his side, but occupied in paying his devoirs to the heiress, the strain of the old man's meditations would sometimes escape in the humming of a tune, or the muttering of a proverb. But whenever he was at all touched with wine, the manifestation of all his feelings assumed a character of the most ludicrous sort imaginable. He punned, he chuckled, he squinted, he rubbed

his hands, or, if he was sitting, the brawny left leg, which, when in that attitude, he generally supported in a horizontal position over his right knee—he volunteered snatches of Earse epithalamiums — expatiated upon Glenstroan — raved about the pedigree of the Clanronalds— and, on one occasion, even carried his enthusiasm so far, as to insist on Lady Catline's going down a few couples of a country dance with him—but that, to be sure, was after supper—and our Caledonian had perhaps adopted Castruccio Castrucani's opinion, "That, if a man spend his days wisely, he need never be very squeamish about what he does with his nights."

One thing was sufficiently perceptible, in spite of all the bustle to which the conflict of so many competitors and their allies gave occasion, and this was, that Miss Catline had a mind of her own, and would probably, in the end, cut the knot after nobody's fancy but her own. There was something determined and even imperious in the young lady's eye ; and there was infinite composure in her whole management of herself. She evidently despised her mother—at least she announced, without the smallest scruple, opinions on all sorts of subjects in direct opposition to hers ; and sometimes accompanied this (Reginald at all events could not help thinking so) with a sarcastic sneer that was anything but ultra-filial. Nor, in truth, did Miss Barbara appear to stand in awe of her father much more than of her mother ; he, indeed, being a man of sense, and a man of the world, was not very likely to make a parade of his natural authority ; yet, at times, little words and looks did occur, which betrayed that he was not the master in that quarter so much as he would have it supposed. There was occasionally something of the cold and the sullen in the young lady's demeanour, even towards him. And it need not be denied, that, disposed as Reginald still was, partly in spite of himself, to judge rather severely of some parts of Sir Charles's past conduct, this part of Miss Catline's demeanour, under all the circumstances of the case, did not strike our hero as being either very amiable or very graceful. Shall the truth be spoken at once? There was, in the midst of all these scenes of gaiety and splendour, a certain weight of anxiety, which nothing seemed to have the power of entirely removing from Sir Charles's brow. Reginald persuaded himself (perhaps absurdly and rashly enough), that this was the gloom of repentance, rather than that of disapprobation. His disposition made him wish to think ill of as few people as possible ; and he ended with pitying Sir Charles, and reserving all his bitter feelings for that haughty girl ; and this, too, at the very moment when almost everybody about him considered him as one of her wooers.

The name of Frederick Chisney has already been mentioned in connection with that of Miss Catline ; and it has been said, at least hinted, that, although he also paid her considerable attentions, he did so in an unobtrusive and modest style of gallantry, which might, after all, be by no means inconsistent with the total absence of any designs upon her person or her purse. Such was indeed the case. Frederick was so accustomed to find amusement in flirtations, that nobody who knew him would think him serious, merely because he flirted ; and Reginald knew him at least as well as any other member of the society in which he was at this time moving. But, in regard to him, Reginald, as entirely as in regard to any other of the group, was left to the acuteness of his own observation. There was no confidence between him and Chisney. The first time they met in London, Chisney's brother, indeed, did everything he could to make them meet as friends ; and Reginald had gone to the meeting better disposed than the reader may have been very apt to imagine, to forget all the painful past and see only in Frederick, one who had erred egregiously from some sudden impetus of rash and ungovernable passion, and who had atoned for his sin by blood and by repentance. And had Frederick, restored to health and strength, retained the same feelings, under the influence of which he had, when Reginald visited his sick-bed, entreated him to bear the contrition of his heart, the deep remorse of his whole spirit, to the feet of Ellen Hesketh—had this been so, there can be little doubt, that, after a few interviews had sufficed to do away with the necessary and unavoidable awkwardness of the relative situation in which they stood to each other, these young men might really have become, not only companions again, but even perhaps friends. As it was, they became neither. Frederick Chisney met Reginald Dalton for the first time with a blush—and for several successive occasions, he never met him without betraying some symptoms of confusion. But he avoided sitting near him, or entering into anything that could be called conversation with him *then*—and when custom had enabled his cheek to retain its coolness in his presence, a distant civility, and a somewhat formal politeness, came imperceptibly to be the established limit of their intercourse. James Chisney, who remarked all this, took occasion more than once to express to Reginald himself his regret that it was so ; but he had too much good sense to think of battling with such things as these, and contented himself with thinking, that the embarrassment in his brother's manner might be the result of nothing but the deep regret with which he must, he doubted not, reflect on the serious consequences which his indiscretion had ultimately entailed upon an old associate like Reginald Dalton.

But little did the good Squire of Thorwold, little did Reginald Dalton himself, understand

what really was, and had been, passing in Frederick Chisney's mind.

That vain spirit, so soon as bodily health restored it to its usual energies, could not brook the idea of the terrible humiliation which it had undergone. The very thought of having stooped to solicit pardon at the hand of one who had detected such transgression, and inflicted such chastisement, was gall, worse than all the rest, and wormwood. Besides—he, too, had been destined for the church—he, too, had been expelled from his college—and for him, too, that path of ambition had been for ever closed. For him, indeed, there remained an abundant choice of other paths—but that was the one which he had always contemplated—that was the one in which his family connections rendered his success certain;—driven from that, he might rise in the world, but it must be, comparatively speaking, by his own exertions, by the labour of his own mind, by self-denial of gratifications—after a long course of busy, toilsome years—and these, too, the brightest years of his life, all the years of his young manhood. And were these things which Frederick Chisney could forgive? Could he smile upon the man to whom he could not but trace all this? Or if he could smile upon him, what smile could that be but the disguise of bitterness, the mask and the consummation of gathered, condensed, inexpiable hatred!

He hated Dalton. He had injured Dalton; and therefore, had there been nothing more, he would have hated him. But Dalton had injured him too; and he hated him with the deliberate, settled rancour of a disappointed fiend.

And where was to be his revenge? Before he saw Reginald in London, the very day before he saw him, he heard from his brother's lips the whole story of Grypherwast and Miss Catline; and along with that, the expression of his brother's anxious hope, that, by an alliance with this young lady, Reginald might repair the fortunes which a cruel combination of circumstances had in every part shattered, and regain possession of that ancient inheritance, of which the caprice of a silly woman had defrauded him and his family. There needed no more than this to determine Chisney. He knew that Reginald had entertained a violent prejudice against Sir Charles Catline, and this girl, and the whole of their race. That prejudice could not have been diminished by the events which had just been revealed. Judging from himself to others, as they that combine wickedness with vanity are never slow to do, he doubted not, that Reginald, whatever might have been his ties with Miss Hesketh (and what these were, Chisney, in reality, knew not even now), would embrace the scheme, which, it appeared, so many had agreed in pointing out to him, and were to lend him their best aid in pursuing. He doubted not, that Reginald would overcome his prejudices, and make love to this girl, whom he had hated; but, "as yet," he said to himself, "he has his work to begin—he has made no love to her formerly—he is starting on his race—Why must he start alone?"

In a word, Frederick Chisney had resolved from the beginning to lay siege to Miss Catline, with all the art of which he was master. Knowing his brother's views and sentiments, he foresaw the necessity of disguising his purpose—but the purpose was taken—it was his. Could he succeed, and he was not the man to think humbly of his own chances, what a triumph would be his! He should be master of an estate three times more valuable than that of his brother; he should laugh at the church, and at all the prospects which he had forfeited; and, above all, he should have achieved the dearest and the most complete revenge over Dalton—outwit him in love, baffle him in ambition, and laugh at him and all his miseries beneath the roof of his ancestors.

Although, therefore, Chisney's attentions had been less than those of any of his rivals forced upon the eye of any observer, we may rest pretty well satisfied, that they had been neither the least ardently nor the least artfully urged.

CHAPTER XLVII.

AN ELOPEMENT.

MR. WARD, meantime, was far too delicate a person to ask Reginald questions about an affair such as that he really supposed to be occupying the best part of his young guest's thoughts, and the old gentleman was deceived, perhaps, by the very strength of his own wishes, in regard to it, as well as by external trifles, which, in this situation of mind, he was too ready to consider as indicative of something better than mere civility and politeness. In a word, Reginald's kind host and patron was beginning to entertain very sanguine hopes of seeing a speedy and effectual termination to the youth's troubles—a termination a thousand times more delightful than any voyage to the East Indies could ever have presented.

It was under the influence of such feelings that the old gentleman amused himself with devising a *fête champêtre* to be given at a little villa which he had on the Thames, not far above Putney Bridge, and at which he proposed to assemble all Reginald's friends, and a considerable number of his own more elderly associates besides. He mentioned this little scheme to Miss Catline and her mother, and had the satisfaction to find them both delighted with it. "It would be so charming—they had never seen anything of the rural scenery in the

neighbourhood of London—it would be something so new and so pretty. And then they could go by water, and return the other way in the evening." In short, the whole arrangements were soon perfected. The ladies were to go up early in the day in a barge belonging to the India House—They were to carry musicians along with them. After walking about the grounds, there would be a *déjeûné à la fourchette* at three o'clock, and the young people might spend the evening in dancing, while billiards or cards amused the senior part of the assemblage. The weather was extremely fine for the season—the skies were clear, and the gardens were just blooming into beauty. All concerned looked forward with pleasure to the variety of a gay day out of London, among lawns, and groves, and streams. And when the day came, and it was seen that the sky was serene and unclouded, expectation and anticipation were at their height.

This party had been arranged ere Mr. Ward gave any notice of it to Reginald, and it will easily be believed that he was far from contemplating the matter with much of that enthusiasm which his kind-hearted friend had imagined the mention of such an affair, at such a time, would kindle in his bosom. However, Reginald entered into the thing with a good grace, and accompanied Lady Catline and her immediate party in their barge. There could not have been a more auspicious day—there was all the freshness of spring in the air—the river was perfectly smooth, and perfumes floated around them from the opening leaves and flowers. Reginald, almost in spite of himself, was happy—happier than he had been for months. Hope shone for him in the shining sky—his imagination flew from Thames to Ganges ; and the presence of Barbara Catline could not dispel fond dreams of Ellen Hesketh.

When they reached the villa, he exerted himself, as was proper, in showing every attention in his power to Mr. Ward's visitors. The *déjeûné* was served in two marquees pitched in the flower-garden, and he presided in one of these, while Mr. Ward did the honours of the other. Old Macdonald, who sat near Reginald, having been sharpened by the breeze of the river, did infinite justice to the refection, and the champagne he swallowed had so benign an effect upon him, that he was the first to propose sending for the fiddles, and even exhibited his own agility in several successive dances. The novelty of the scene, the brightness of the sun, and the freshness of the air, diffused a kindred species of exultation through all the company. Never was a gayer meeting—never did lighter steps bound on painted floor beneath the blaze of lamps. The music never stopped. Scotch reels were mingled with country dances, and the youthful couples, when they retired from the echoing turf, might recruit their vigour for the next set by reposing or loitering among the coolest alleys and the most fragrant bowers.

Miss Catline was dancing with the Cornet of the Blues. The exercise had flushed her cheek—the Cornet was capering very gallantly.

"Just look at them," says old Macdonald, taking his station close to the garden-chair from which Lady Catline was surveying the brilliant scene, and handing her at the same time a salver of ices—"Just look, my leddy, I'm sure it's enough to do onybody's heart good. I declare it's a bonny sight."

"Indeed, Mr. Macdonald," murmured her ladyship—"indeed 'tis a sweet evening, and this is a charming little spot ; and Mr. Ward is a charming old gentleman. Upon my word he exerts himself as much as if these young people were children of his own, and yet you know he's an old bachelor, after all."

"Bachelor or no bachelor, my leddy, wha could look at thae bonnie bairns without being pleesured with the very sight o' them? Puir things, how light their hearts are now!—The warld's a' brightness to them, that's weel seen—Aweel, aweel, let them e'en enjoy themselves—What for should they no?—They're young folk ; daffin's natural to them. How could we expect it should be otherwise? And with this he beat the measure with his foot, and snapped his fingers to the tune, with the air of one that indulges pleasant, and yet half-pensive thoughts.

"Ah! yes," said her ladyship—"we have all been young in our day, Mr. Macdonald. Well, I confess I am glad to see a man of your time of life, and a busy man too, taking so much pleasure in witnessing the merriment of young people."

"Your leddyship is very polite—but od, ma'am, shall I be plain wi' your leddyship?—Do you no mind that bonny little sentiment in a certain song that's no a very new ane now-a-days?—Mercy! have I forgotten't mysell, too?—'And when time'—'And when time.'—Ay, ay, this is the way o't—

> 'And when with envy Time, transported,
> Shall think to rob us of our joys,
> You'll in your girls again be courted,
> And I'll go wooing in my boys.'

And are na thae very bonny lines, my leddy?"

"Very much so, indeed, Mr. Macdonald, and very prettily recited, too."

"Aha! your leddyship must not be ower severe now—ye ken we canna help our brogue—Gude safe us! I'm ane o' them that just look to the substantials, and lets lesser matters shift as they like best."

"Hem!"

"And did I no mak mysell intelligible to your leddyship?—weel, I cannot help it. Od, ma'am, I've had other things to think o' than polishing of my pronoonciation. There's that callant of mine, Tam, there, even he—

de'il mean him—sometimes laughs at my auld-faushioned gait of saying things—but 'tis a daft laddie, my leddy—a daft, light-headed creature; but though I say't, that should not say it, a warm heart, a kind, warm, affectionate heart, that's what oor Tam had ever since he was the height of my knee, puir fallow; and that your leddyship will find to be the case wi' him—and ane that's nearer concerned yet will find it sae too, and that's what's nae sma' comfort for me to think o' sometimes, my leddy—for, after a', these are serious matters, and more especially atween sic young folk.—Od! look at them now, my leddy—Will onybody deny that that's an eesome couple? As for *her*—but hoots, hoots, I think I'm barrowing Tam's daffin ere he has done wi't a' himsell. Ay, ay (snapping his fingers again),—ay, ay, Tam, boy, that's the way, my man,—I really think Tam Macdonald dances very decently, my Leddie Catline."

"Very prettily, indeed, Mr. Macdonald. And there, look at Mr. Frederick Chisney—Don't you think he dances very well?"

"Let me see—ay, Lord! that *was* a loup—od, he's an active chield that—and so few weeks, too, since he was thought by a'body to be not for this world. Mr. Chisney has a light foot—but when they take to the reels, my leddy—But ye've seen Thomas dance reels too?"

"Oh, yes—you know he danced one just now with that girl in the spotted silk."

"Ay, it's as your leddyship says—and, in truth, he danced it well too."

"Very well indeed, Mr. Macdonald. And there's that Dalton—everybody says he's so handsome—I protest, to me—but I'm no judge, perhaps——"

"Your leddyship nae judge!—Na, na, tell that tale to the Kirk Session—"

"The Kirk Session!—La! now, what d'ye mean, Mr. Macdonald?"

"Naething ava—naething ava—mere havers. But what was you saying about the lad Dalton?"

"Nothing, only that I think he's a poor dancer."

"A dancer!—Lord, mem, he's no dancer at all—he's nothing to call a dancer—swim, swim, pace, pace—no life, no spirit.—His heart's no in't, mem—the heart's the thing in a' thing, dancing as weel's the rest. Just compare him wi' our Tam—yon's dancing—yon's the real gait.—But, to be sure—to be sure, I had forgotten ae thing, my leddy."

"And what may that be, my dear Mr. Macdonald?"

"What may't be, my dear Leddy Catline?—And what should it be but the partners?—Does not that matter make an awfu' difference, my leddy?—Od bless me! I would think the lad had need to be made o' stane, or lead, or timber at the least penny, that could stand up wi' that sweet, genty, modest, and lovely beautiful creature, and not dance, dance-like——. O! Leddy Catline, ye may weel be a proud woman."

"Of what, Mr. Macdonald?"

"Na, na, it's no for me to be telling your leddyship a' you have to be proud o'. My word, that would be a tale, indeed. But what's the use of palavering? I was looking *yonder*, and how could I help saying your leddyship had braw reason to be proud?"

"Oh! I understand ye now, Mr. Macdonald—my daughter."

"Ay, indeed, Lady Catline. What else could I mean—what else could onybody mean? O! mem, she's a lovely young lady. When I look at her sometimes, father as I am, I cannot help thinking O! Tam, Tam!"

"Tam?—what's Tam?"

"What's Tam?—yon's Tam, Leddy Catline."

"Your son, Mr. Macdonald?"

"Ay, my dear leddy, and no offence, I hope—But really, since we're on't, I hope it's no to be very lang now or your leddyship may have anither name—"

"Me another name! Mr. Macdonald. I protest I don't understand you, sir."

"Your leddyship has siccan a rapid way!—But what signifies havering?—Your leddyship kens what's what. May's no canny, at least we think sae i' the north—there's nae-body in the north will ever even May to onything o' that kind"—

"May! Mr. Macdonald? Bless me! what are you thinking of—this is but the twenty-seventh of April, surely?"

"Ay, and then there's three or four days, and that's naething to speak o', ye ken—and whare are we?—In the bonny month of May, surely, my leddy; and, as I was saying, May, though it is the sweetest month in a' the year, is the only month that nobody in the north country ever thinks o' buckling in—it would be looked on as a mere tempting of Providence—mere havers, a' that, nae doubt—*we* ken that, my leddy—but folk will cling to sic fancies, when they're ance fairly grained in them. Does your leddyship know what was the origin of the superstition against buckling in May?"

"Nay, indeed, Mr. Macdonald—I am not able to follow you sometimes. What is it ye are talking of, my dear sir?"

"Why, you see, my leddy, the real truth of the matter is neither more nor less than that that poor silly Jeezabel, oor Queen Mary, married that lang-legged neerdoweel, Darnley, in the month of May, and ever sinsyne, the Scots folk have regarded it as no canny—"

"Canny?"

"Ay, not suitable, not safe, not proper.—There's no Scot's couple ever marries in May—the poorest body would grew at the very mention of sic a thing—they cannot thole't, that's the plain fact of the case, my leddy—'tis just ane of their superstitions, but there's

naebody will ding them out o't—at least not in our time. Tam, to be sure, may think little o' the like of thae things—but yet I cannot say, there's no saying what might happen—there's no saying what thoughts will come into young women's heads in certain situations, as your leddyship kens far better than me, I'm sure ; and if she was to happen not to have the benefit of your leddyship's company, poor young thing, and her a' surrounded wi' Scots folk, she might hear things said—she might put ae thing till anither. There's no saying what even a sensible discreet young woman might fancy at sic a time as that."

"I profess I'm quite bewildered, Mr. Macdonald. What are you speaking about?—April, and May, and Queen Mary, and Lord Darnley, and their wedding, which was, I take it, some three hundred years ago, and your son, the young Cornet my friend, and fancies, and Scots superstitions! God bless my soul! my dear Mr. Macdonald, what *are* you talking of? You have totally gone beyond me—indeed you have."

"Totally gone beyond your leddyship!—But, hoots, hoots—I see you're joking, mem—you're joking—you're joking."

"Not at all, Mr. Macdonald — never less——"

"And 'tis just a pleasure to you to put on that face—"

"What face, Mr. Macdonald?"

"O Leddy Catline! my dear Leddy Catline!—but now you've had your joke aff me, let's speak a little quiet bit of sense now thegither — the young folks a' dancing—there's naebody will hear us.—Od! sic a din as that ane wi' the violoncello maks!—When is't to be, Leddy Catline? since other folk intend to speak, what can I do?"

"To be? what to be, Mr. Macdonald?" said the lady with an air of surprise, rather too grave to be affected.

"What's to be, Leddy Catline?"

"Yes, what's to be, Mr. Macdonald?"

"What's to be, mem?"

"What's to be, sir?"

"The thing, mem — the business — the whole affair——"

"The whole affair, sir?—the business, sir?"

"Yes, mem, the business—the business—God bless my heart!"

"The business, Mr. Macdonald?"

"Come, come, Leddy Catline—we've had enough of this work. Time's no chuckey-stanes—Has your leddyship not been holding any serious conversation?"

"Why, really, Mr. Macdonald, I scarce think we *have* been very serious."

"'Sdeath, mem, what do you mean?"

"Sir?"

"Mem?"

"Mr. Macdonald?"

"Leddy Catline?"

"Sir?"

"Hoots, hoots—a joke's a joke."

"A joke?"

"Ay, a joke."

"Indeed, indeed," said Lady Catline, half-rising from her chair, "I believe you've been taking rather too much of Mr. Ward's *œil de perdrix*, Mr. Macdonald."

"Oil of the devil, mem! what are ye driving at?"

"Mr. Macdonald, I really don't understand you. What is it you have been talking of all this while?"

"And what should I have been talking of, mem? Wasn't I talking all the time about our twa bairns—Thomas there, and——"

"Mr. Thomas Macdonald, sir?"

"Mr. Thomas Macdonald and Miss Barbara Catline—Will nothing but christened name and surname please your leddyship?"

"Oh, I begin to perceive——"

"Your leddyship *begins* to perceive—Really, really, this is too much, my dear Leddy Catline."

"Really, really, this is too much, Mr. Macdonald."

"Your Leddyship is displeased—I crave a thousand pardons.—What have I done?—what have I said?"

"Rather too much of both, Mr. Macdonald—but——"

"But what, Leddy Catline?"

"To say truth, Mr. Macdonald, I wish you would just look down the alley there, and see what Sir Charles is making of himself all this time."

"Sir Charles is away into the house, mem—I saw him going—But really, Leddy Catline, I wish you would just give me the satisfaction—it's more natural for a young leddy to speak to her mother than her father. You must know what is to be—and really time's wearing on—we've been six weeks in London come Tuesday—surely, surely, a' thing might be arranged now—they've seen a great deal of each other—they're sensible young folk—what would they stand dilly-dallying at langer for?—what for no put a' thing to rest at once by naming a day?"

"For what?"

"For the wedding."

"What wedding?"

"Their wedding."

"Whose wedding, Mr. Macdonald?"

"Tam and his sweetheart—Lord bless my heart, your leddyship's daft. What have we been speaking about?"

"I promise you, I should be much at a loss to answer that question of yours, Mr. Macdonald."

"Your leddyship will make *me* daft, I think. What *is* the use of all this hargle-bargling? The thing *is* to be, I suppose—there's no disputing of that."

"What thing?"

"The wedding.—My son and your leddyship's daughter's wedding."

"O Lord! O Lord! O Lord! Why, my good Mr. Macdonald, I believe, you'll be the death of me—ha! ha! ha! he! he! he! ho! ho! ho!"

"Your leddyship is facetious."

"Lord bless me, Mr. Macdonald—a man of your sense—is it possible?——"

"My Leddy Catline, I crave you tak me wi' you."

"Why now—but pooh, pooh, 'tis nothing but this champagne."

"Champagne, madam!—I never was more sober in my life, nor, whatever your leddyship may please to say or to think, more serious."

"Serious—come, come—impossible."

"Possible—probable—*fact*—fact, my Leddy Catline," and his face glowed.

"A little flirtation—a mere flirtation!—I'm sure, Mr. Macdonald, if the two young people choose to like it, and if Sir Charles and you—"

"Sir Charles and me!"

"Yes, if they liked it, and you two agreed, I'm sure, Mr. Macdonald, you have seen enough of certain matters to know, that I would never be——"

"They've been trifling with your leddyship," quoth Ralph, folding his arms on his breast — "they've been playing with you, mem. Is it possible that at *this* time of day——"

"Come, come, Mr. Macdonald—my good friend Mr. Macdonald, you really must be a man of a *very* quick fancy, or I must be a woman of *very* slow perception."

"It's no for me to expound these things—you see they're forming for a new dance. May I beg your leddyship to cry Miss Barbara till ye—I'll leave you to yoursels—talk wi' her—talk wi' her calmly, mem—she's your ain bairn, Leddy Catline, and a bonny bairn it is—talk calmly and reasonably—bid her have done wi' her glaiketness for a wee, and let's hear plain sense for ance. — Where's Sir Charles?"

"You said just now he had gone into the house—but I see how it is, Mr. Macdonald, you really forget everything."

"Not just so, neither," he whispered; "see you dinna forget what I said this moment.—I'll just speak a single word to Sir Charles, and be back to you again." He bowed very low, smiled very sweetly, and pointed to Barbara and withdrew.

Mr. Macdonald found Sir Charles attending a party of gentlemen at the billiard-table; and, after looking on with him for a little while, proposed to him to take another turn through the grounds, ere the sun should be set; and the Baronet consenting, they were soon walking together by the margin of Thames, at a considerable distance from any other part of the company.

"These eternal fiddles!" says Sir Charles—"I think they might have had enough of it by this time; for my part I wish the carriages were ordered."

"Poor things, Sir Charles, let them tak their sport out. It would not set us neither to dance nor hold the candle."

"No, no, Macdonald, I'm not impatient—not I. I wonder what Lady Catline has made of herself."

"I left her leddyship but this moment—she's looking on at the young folk. But, between ourselves, Sir Charles, I was just speaking a little on a certain subject to Leddy Catline, and, to tell you the truth, I was a little surprised—"

"Surprised, my dear sir?—With what?"

"Come, come now, my dear Sir Charles—you cannot need to be asking that now. Really, I think you should have told Leddy Catline more about the matter than you would seem to have done. It's no for me to meddle wi' family matters. I'm the last man in the world that would like to do anything that way, Sir Charles! but really, really, a mother, Sir Charles, and after things have gone so far, a mother no to be even let into a matter that, I may say, is all cut and dry—I hope you'll pardon me, my good sir—will you just gang away, and converse a little—talk it ower quietly—there can be no objection, ye ken—none—none. Do let my leddy hear a' about it from yourself."

"My dear Mr. Macdonald, you are really rather hasty. Can't you let things take their own way for a little? Everything seems to be going on as we could wish. How sincerely my wishes coincide with your own God knows, and I need not tell you that *now*. Young people must just be allowed to please themselves with their style of managing certain affairs. They are very much together—you could not wish them to be more so than they are. Barbara knows my sentiments—You know I let her see what I felt from the beginning. But, my dear Mr. Macdonald, you know as well as I, that my daughter has a mind of her own—you can't be ignorant of facts, Macdonald—you know what the state of the case is. Barbara knows my mind. Your son is a handsome, agreeable, elegant young man; far superior in every respect, unless my partiality greatly deceives me, to any other young man she is in the habit of meeting here—far, very far superior. He is very young, however, and perhaps his modesty—but I love him the better for that—may protract things a little more than might otherwise have been—and she is very young, and everything is new to her, Macdonald. Why hurry?—why so much haste, my dear friend? If she were evidently slighting his addresses, and preferring some other's, there might be some pretence—some colour—some excuse; but as things stand, God bless my soul, what should we wish? Come, come, Macdonald, my good friend, you are weary of London, that's the fact, and you wish to

be back to Edinburgh or Glenstroan, and 'tis all natural; but, seriously, we must not run the risk of spoiling all by precipitation on our parts. *Laissez faire—laissez faire*—and *entre nous, mon ami, le coup vaut bien la balle—attendez, attendez.*"

"Attendez here, attendez there, my friend, the real fact is, that I'm not fond of dancing on at this rate so long—but what for not tell Leddy Catline?"

"O, my dear sir, you must really allow me to be the better judge there; but in confidence, strictly between ourselves, Macdonald, I don't think that Barbara would be at all more likely to think favourably of any one thing under the sun, because her mother recommended it; and besides, how do we know what view Lady Catline might take?"

"God bless my soul! You say yourself he's as comely a lad as any o' them—and you, Sir Charles, you know very well that there's as good blood in his veins——"

"I know that, my dear fellow. I know it perfectly—I know you can trace yourself to the Lords of the Isles. Every one knows that, Macdonald."

"Well, Sir Charles—and then as to fortune—I'm not a *very* auld man yet—hale enough, maybe—"

"Ay truly, and long may you be so, my friend."

"Thank ye—but yet threescore's threescore, Sir Charles; and Glenstroan, let me tell you, is a gay bonnie bit addendum. There's few properties in the Highlands that, laying myself out of view, I would say was more desirable—quite compact—bonnie land—fine pasture, Sir Charles—tenants substantial folk—and no ae plack o' burden; neither debt nor mortgage, nor feu, nor casualty, no, nor tythes, man, not ae baubee—nor poor's rates, God pity ye, we dinna ken the very name o' them. And what is't, then, that Lady Catline could say against it?—What could she say? I protest, I dinna think she's sae void of gumption. But no offence, no offence, Sir Charles. What signifies standing about trifles, when we ken that the thing is to be, and maun be, and shall be?"

"My dear friend, Macdonald, you are warm."

"Not at all, my dear friend, Sir Charles—I'm quite cool."

"*This* coolness?"

"Ay, coolness—cool as a cucumber."

"You're extremely hasty, I think; and 'tis not wise in you, neither, Macdonald."

"Wise is that wise does, Sir Charles.—I'll tell you what it is, Miss Catline's fond of her play—there she's dancing wi' half a dozen o' thae gay young sparks. I sometimes think—but no no—only take ye this wi' you, Sir Charles, that Ralph Macdonald is not a man to be trifled withal. It's not vows and professions that will do with me, Sir Charles."

"You suspect me of dealing unfairly with you. You wrong me, Mr. Macdonald."

"Me suspect you, Sir Charles?—Od, man, ye little ken. *If* I suspected——"

"What?"

"You know what—ha! ha! Why do you ask?"

"Because I don't know what you mean. I can't believe—God bless me! Have I not done all you asked—all you could ask?"

"Then do what I *do* ask, too. Sir Charles, Sir Charles, take my word for't, we've had enough of the appel and the longe at the wa', and taking the time. I know where I stand."—(Here Macdonald stamped twice with his right foot, rapidly and firmly, but yet not quite *à la Francalanza.*)—"'Tis high time to proceed to *work.*"

"To work! Macdonald—but I did not know you were such a fencer."

"Aha! you'll find me up to mair things than that, Sir Charles. But what's the use of havering?—The plain English o' the maitter"—

"The plain Scotch, rather, Macdonald."

"The plain sense, if ye ken that language, Sir Charles, is, that we're spinning out an hour's wark to a twalmonth's. Speak to your daughter yourself, sir, and if nothing else will do, and do directly, why, tell her the real truth of the case, and then, I trow, we'll soon see light."

"Are you serious in this, Macdonald?"

"Am I used to be a jester, Sir Charles Catline?"

"Have you no feeling for me, sir?—Have you entirely laid that out of the case?—Is it not enough that I give you all I can, without——"

"Without what?—havers, havers. The truth is, sir, that Tam tells me he can get no direct answer from the lady—she flirts and dances, that she'll do wi' him or wi' onybody, for aught that I see—but whenever he speaks a serious word, it gets the go by."

"Give them time, give them time."

"Time?—Time's the wise man's gowd, and the gowk's counters. Fair speeches and fleeching looks are rife enow—but I'm not ane that likes to take payment in monkey money."

"Spare my feelings, Macdonald, I entreat you—be a man, and remember——"

"I do remember. Sir Charles, you need not think to play with me."

"God is my witness I am sincere. I am anxious—I am as much so as yourself can be, sir—but you look to nothing but yourself—you have no sympathy—you would sacrifice anything."

"I will sacrifice nothing, Sir Charles. But take your choice, if you don't choose to do this, one way or other to do it, and that directly, why, be't on your own head, I shall find a way."

"To what, sir?—to what?—to what?"

"To what, sir?—to everything, sir. Miss Catline has a head—my faith, we may doubt that, may we? Miss Barbara Catline is no gomerel — I'll speak to her myself, Sir Charles."

"You are most welcome. But why should I doubt that—you will hint nothing?"

"Nothing. I'll *hint* nothing. I'll be as plain as I'm pleasant."

"Plain, Macdonald—will you have the cruelty?—"

"Cruelty?—a fig for sic cruelty. My word, we're no at that, man. Miss Barbara played you ae braw trick—i' my faith, she's no sae egg-shelly but she may be trusted wi' hearing a' we have to tell her."

"Macdonald," said Sir Charles, taking him by the hand—"I thought you were my friend, Macdonald, and I thought you were candid. Am I mistaken in both points?"

"In neither o' them, Sir Charles. I *am* your friend, and I *am* candid. If it were not so—but you knew the whole affair at least as well as I could tell it ye."

"Macdonald, I will make an effort. I beseech you have patience—I will speak to Barbara to-morrow—I will speak to her at length, and seriously—but you must, you must spare one thing."

"Try your hand, Sir Charles. If you do the thing *so*, well—if you don't, you know how you *can* do it; and i' God's name, let's have no more shillyshallying—at it, sir, up and at it. Why put that off till the morn that may be done the day? Seek her—come away to the dancing—do the thing at once—be a man, be a man."

"Well, but leave me for a moment to myself—I shall follow you directly. Let me take a little walk here by myself."

"Weel, weel, e'en's you like—but the sun's down, and 'tis cauld here by the waterside."

"No, no. Don't you see there are some of the young people have got into a boat—they're rowing for pleasure yet."

"Hoots," says Macdonald, lifting and dropping his glass, "it's some of the flunkeys, I believe. But come away, come away, ye'll have little eneugh time before dinner—it was ordered at seven, ye ken, and we're to gae hame soon afterhen, I reckon."

The two gentlemen now walked together pretty quickly to that part of the lawn where the dancing had been—*had been*, for when they reached it, the musicians were seen amusing themselves with porter-pots, and certain cold pies;—in a word, the ball was over, and the company had retired into the villa.

"Very unlucky," quoth Macdonald, "but ye may get a word o' her before dinner yet."

A most melodious gong, however, began its long-ascending volume of sound at that moment; and the Scot, rubbing his hands, said, "Ha! already—but, however, it's a braw bell that, Sir Charles. Od! man, that puts me in mind of Kinrara, in the bonnie Duchess's time, poor woman!"

They entered the house together, but when they reached the dining-room, they found that the company had already, for the most part, taken their places. A seat had been kept for the Baronet at the principal table, near Mr. Ward, and he was no sooner discovered than he was called to take possession of it, thereby separated, we shall not presume to conjecture how unwillingly, from Mr. Macdonald, who was fain to accept of "a bottom-room" (so he himself called it in the course of his inquiries) at a side-table, where our friend Dick Stukeley was presiding over a juvenile detachment.

Macdonald fidgetted a little at the first, because he had nothing but a backless bench to sit upon, but minor inconveniences were soon forgotten, and he laid all his ears in the mulligatauny. Stukeley, busy as he himself was, could not help resting his eye now and then on the hoary Celt, in the progress of the feast. How his lips reddened and glistened!—How his small, grey, piercing, twinkling eyes kindled! And the nose, how it swelled and grew, and crimsoned, and purpled, and at last absolutely blackened! The Sherry was "auld and rich," such were his murmured ejaculations of satisfaction:—the Madeira had not "doubled the Cape for nothing:"—the Constantia was "a perfect cordial:"—the Hock was "a grand stimulus, Mr. Stukeley:"—the Champagne was "enough to tempt Abraham, man." In a word, Mr. Macdonald of Glenstroan was in the seventh heaven.—

He was in the act of washing down his Parmesan with a bumper of "particular" port, when a low whisper, that had been for half a minute travelling round the room, approached his ear.—"Miss Catline!—where is Miss Catline?—Is Miss Catline at that table?—Lady Catline wishes to know where Miss Catline is." The whisper gained strength as it spread. It had almost ceased to be a whisper ere it reached Macdonald.

"Miss Catline an't at either of the side-tables, your ladyship," said Ward's favourite old Mussulman.

"Where is Barbara Catline?" said her ladyship, half rising from her seat, and looking round very anxiously. "She's not at this table, surely?"

"Nor at this," says a voice from one corner of the room.

"Nor here," quoth Stukeley. "Do you see Miss Catline anywhere, Mr. Macdonald?"

"Miss Catline?—why, what? where is she?"

MR. WARD. O, ma'am, I suppose there was no appearance of room at the tables. We sat down in such a hurry, you know. Pray, go out, some of you, and let Miss Catline know. Upon my word, I'm quite ashamed. Such a hurry, to be sure.

MUSSULMAN. Plenty of room, your honour—plenty of seats vacant—could put up severals at the round table yet.

MR. WARD. Come, come—Look, look—What is this?

LADY CATLINE. O! Mr. Ward—'tis so foolish. Sir Charles, Sir Charles—I beg you would just——

SIR CHARLES. Pooh! pooh! What are you thinking of, my love? Barbara will be here this moment. Is there no table in another room?

MUSSULMAN. None, your honour, none—all company here.

LADY CATLINE. O, my dear Sir Charles—O, my dear Mr. Ward—but 'tis *so* foolish—May I beg a glass of water?—Where is Barbara?

MACDONALD. Dear me—what's a' this now?—What's a' this buzz about?

STUKELEY. 'Tis Miss Catline, sir. Nobody seems to know what's become of Miss Catline.

MACDONALD (*standing up*). Whare's our Tam?—Tam Macdonald, I say.

CORNET. Here I'm, father.—What is it, sir?"

MACDONALD. Nothing, nothing. Sit your ways down, you gowk.

STUKELEY. O, sit down yourself, Mr. Macdonald—'tis a mere trifle—the young lady is not far off, I dare say.

MACDONALD. Lord bless you! it was only because I heard Lady Catline. But where is she?

STUKELEY (*aside to* MACDONALD). God knows!—Is there nobody else amissing, I wonder?

MACDONALD (*aside to* STUKELEY). Hoots! hoots!—What are you meaning, Mr. Stukeley, wi' that cunning look of yours?—Ye're a queer fallow, man.

STUKELEY (*aside to* MACDONALD). By Jupiter! Look at Lady Catline's face.—Nay, look at Sir Charles—he's been out of the room too.

MACDONALD. Are we a' here?—God's mercy! the haill room's commovit. Stand out o' my gait there, Tam.—Keep down that head o' yours.

CORNET. Good God! father——

MACDONALD. Good God!—it sets you well.

Enter MUSSULMAN (*aside to* LADY CATLINE). Please your ladyship, the maid says that Miss Catline's cloak and bonnet are not in the blue room.

LADY CATLINE. Oh! oh! oh!

SIR CHARLES CATLINE. Lady Catline!—Julia!—Julia, my love!

LADY CATLINE. She's gone—she's off—she's lost—Barbara! Barbara!

MACDONALD. Nonsense, nonsense—(*aside*).—How that woman squeals!

MR. WARD. The gong!—the gong, immediately—run, run, search the shrubbery. (*Gong without.*)

MR. COLLINS. My dear Lady Catline, I'll run this moment. I pray you, be composed—I'll just run round the walks. (*Exit.*)

MACDONALD. Mr. Dalton! Mr. Dalton, I say—where's Mr. Dalton?

STUKELEY (*aside to* MACDONALD). I see Reginald—that's he by the window.

MACDONALD. Oo, ay—oo, ay—what am I saying?—Lord keep us a'!—What's this?

STUKELEY (*aside to* MACDONALD). What the devil is Frederick Chisney making of himself in this row—where is he?

MACDONALD. Mr. Chisney!—Mr. Chisney!—Where are you?

LADY CATLINE. Mr. Chisney! Oh! where is Mr. Chisney?—Oh! oh!

MR. WARD. Mr. Chisney!—Is Mr. Chisney at the side-table?

SIR CHARLES CATLINE (*jumping over a bench*). Mr. Chisney!—

Now was the scene of utter confusion—twenty people leaving their places—some leaping over tables and chairs—bottles smashed—china shattered—talking, raving, screaming, shrieking, prancing, pushing, stamping, dancing. In an instant, the greater part of the company was dispersed—Gong sounding, bells ringing—shouting, roaring—women fanning, men rushing—Lady Catline fainting—total hubbub!—A few only, a very select few, remaining all the while as quiet as if nothing had happened. Some old East India Directors kept hobnobbing away with the most perfect indifference; and some very fine ladies looking round, with eyes of that kind of calm disdain, which one sometimes remarks in the side-boxes, when there is a squabble between a sailor and some tailors in the shilling-gallery.

In the course of a few minutes, every part of the grounds had been traversed by a score of searchers. Sir Charles and Mr. Macdonald, who had both been exceedingly active, now met, each red in the face with running—hot, breathless, palpitating, and panting.

MACDONALD. So, sir—so, sir—so this is the way of it, sir! The boat——

SIR CHARLES. The boat!—Good God, Mr. Macdonald!

MACDONALD. Good God, Sir Charles Catline!—But why do you stand puffing and blowing there, sir?

SIR CHARLES. O Macdonald, pity me, pity me!—What of the boat?

MACDONALD. They're off in't—it's lying on the other side of the water—they've found one of the scoundrel's gloves.

SIR CHARLES. Good God!—Order the horses. O Macdonald, order the horses!—I'm undone—I'm ruined!

MACDONALD (*coolly*). Thereafter as it may be, Sir Charles Catline. 'Sdeath, sir—I have a great mind—Ay, stare away, man. Sir, I've been treated in a blackguard fashion.

SIR CHARLES. Sir?—

MACDONALD. Ay, *sir!*—What the devil?

—but don't I understand you, sir?—Ay, you, sir, and you all, sir?—By the red hand!—but wheest, wheest. We'll have another time.

(*Enter* LADY CATLINE.)

LADY CATLINE. O! O! O Sir Charles, they're off to Gretna-Green. Run, run—ride, ride.—My dear Mr. Macdonald!—O Sir Charles!—oh!

MACDONALD. Come, come, mem—this will not do. Here, some of you there, attend to the lady.—Sir Charles!

SIR CHARLES. I call heaven to witness, Macdonald!—But I'm gone. You shall see—you shall see—it may not be too late yet.

MACDONALD. Take your time, sir—you seemed resolved on that part o't. 'Sdeath, sir—Is this a time for you to put your hands in your breeks?—Be off, sir, *or*——

SIR CHARLES. Macdonald!—

MACDONALD. *Or* you know what. D—n it, sir, are ye delirious?—Yonder's the stables—fling your leg ower the first beast you get haud o'.—Run, I say—Are you doited? Are you daft? Are you demented?—A curse!

A crowd of ladies and gentlemen here surrounded our group—Sir Charles, staring wildly about him for a moment, ran at a furious rate towards the stables. Mr. Macdonald followed him, and both were seen, an instant afterwards, galloping towards the gate. Lady Catline went through a long series of hysterical sighing, laughter, weeping, and swooning, and ended with refusing to enter the house, and insisting upon going directly to London after her husband. Mr. Collins, whose face betrayed the most consummate union of surprise, terror, and affliction, was called up by her ladyship to accompany her; and obeyed, evidently unfit to be of any service, or rather ignorant of what services the moment required. However, off drove the carriage. Mr. and Mrs. Chisney of Thorwold also disappeared; and Reginald Dalton walked towards the villa, in the midst of such a buzz of whispers, such an uplifting of hands and eyes, such wondering, and sneering and jeering physiognomies, as an elopement may be supposed to have excited and animated among such an assemblage.

He had been one of the first that joined Macdonald and the Catlines after their last meeting, and he had witnessed something of the old Scotchman's fiery and passionate method of comporting himself upon that occasion—he had also seen him galloping away with Sir Charles on a coach-horse—it was not, therefore, without considerable surprise, that he saw Mr. Macdonald sitting once more in Mr. Ward's dining-room, in not much more than half an hour. By this time, the company had resumed their places, and all manner of external decorum and composure—the conversation, of course, being split into twenty little committees, who were discussing the late incident in as many different tones of commentation. Macdonald had stolen in softly, and taken possession of the first seat he found unoccupied—it happened to be close to Reginald Dalton, who, being engaged in talking with Dick Stukeley, did not observe him for a second or two after he had sat down.

"Good God!" said he—"*You* here, Mr. Macdonald?—Sure you went off with Sir Charles.—Is there any news?"

"Nane, nane ava', Mr. Dalton. There'll be nane this gay while, I'm thinking."

"Bless me, I thought you had gone in the pursuit too."

"Atweel, I would have gone on, if I had thought I could be of any use; but what service could I be of, Mr. Dalton?—Ye ken they were a good three hours a-head. I doubt, I doubt, he'll never overtake them on this side of the Border. Honest man, I'm sure naebody can feel mair for Sir Charles."

"*He* follows on, however?"

"Oo, ay—best to have nothing to reproach himself wi', ye ken. He *may* come up wi' them. I dinna look for't, for one—three hours is an awfu' start. Lord keep us, they'll be at Barnet ere now—sic horses and sic roads, ye ken—and I'se warrant, they'll make the best o' them."

"You may depend on't, Chisney knows what he's about."

"Hem, hem—I'm not quite—But come, come, Mr. Dalton, it's nae brewst o' our barm—ye're keeping the bottle ower lang beside you, my friend. 'Faith, I'll be nane the warse of a glass or twa, after a' this hubbleshew. I declare my mouth's a perfect whistle."

"Here's the claret, Mr. Macdonald—a sly fellow, our friend Chisney—Isn't he?"

"Ay, ay, in truth, he *is* a cunning chield. My word, he's been quiet wi' his wooing too. O the cunning thief—ha! ha! ha!"

"'Tis no joke for Sir Charles, however, Mr. Macdonald."

"Joke?—nor it's no joke for me neither. Poor man, I'm really distressed—and yet it was so neatly done i' the baggage—I cannot help laughing, when I think of us a' sitting here, eating and drinking, and never a body missing them till the cheese was on the table. Ah! he's a true genius, yon lad. Let him alone—a real fox, a real fox, Mr. Dalton—and him as poor as Lazarus too, I take it. My word, he thinks he has feathered his nest brawly now."

"Thinks, Mr. Macdonald?—Why, you know what a fine estate it is?"

"A capital estate—a grand auld ha' house—a bonny park—plate and plenishing—and a bonny little lassie too. My word, he may weel be cadgy in the chaise wi' her—ha! ha!"

"Indeed, Mr. Macdonald, I don't see the thing quite in so ludicrous a point of view.

And why, above all, do the affair in this discreditable way? She's her own mistress—the land's her own. Why not do it all openly? Sir Charles, I dare say, could have no great objection to Chisney's family and connections."

"Chisney's fiddle-sticks!—But what signifies speaking?—We'll see how it turns out—we'll see if he overtakes them."

"Why, even if he does, Mr. Macdonald, I don't see how that will alter the case much. If the young lady be resolved—and especially after all this exposure—why what would be the use of Sir Charles trying to stop it now?"

"Pooh, pooh!—If he comes up wi' them on this side of the water of Eden, we'll see what we'll see. There's mony a lassie has played a pliskie of that kind, and been caught again, and sobered, and made a good quiet douce mother to another man's bairns in the hinder-end."

"Miss Catline's a determined sort of miss, Mr. Macdonald, and she feels her power. I don't think she'll be apt to give in—but, as you say, 'tis not our affair."

"No, no, let them drink that draw the cork, Mr. Dalton. But I'm distressed for poor Sir Charles—a man to be made a fool o' by his ain flesh and blood—'tis very hard, my young friend—but it's only a paurent's heart can sympatheese with these things. 'Tis a sore case, Mr. Dalton—oh! oh! There's little sense o' duty amang bairns now-a-days—their ain idle fancies, that's all in all with them—they a' think themselves wiser than them that begot them, my friend. 'Tis a sair pity it should be sae!—and maybe some of them will rue't themselves or a' be done—But the bottle aye sticks wi' you, Mr. Dalton.—O yes, man, by the time ye've lived in this warld as lang as I've done, ye'll all change your note on mony matters. Young folk are so fu' o' themselves, little, little do they think what a paurent feels—'tis a thing they have no consideration of, Mr. Dalton.—That's really very bonny claret of the old gentleman's.—Oh dear, 'tis a queer warld this—Rax me the nutcrackers, my dear young friend. Oh dear, and just to think of poor Lady Catline!"

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A JOURNEY TO SCOTLAND.

WHATEVER notions our hero might have formed by this time of the character of Mr. Ralph Macdonald, everything he had had occasion to see of his son (and we already know how much they had been thrown together) had tended to impress him with a very favourable opinion of the young gentleman. Shy and embarrassed, when in the presence of his father, the Cornet, when that restraint was not upon him, was, in reality, an agreeable young man, making no pretensions indeed to accomplishment, and evidently but little acquainted with men and the world, but open, sincere, and gay—honourable in his feelings, and perfectly unaffected in his manners. Had Reginald not observed what passed at Mr. Ward's villa, on the great day of the elopement, with acuteness sufficient to put him pretty much in possession of what the elder Macdonald's views had been, he certainly should have gathered no information as to that matter from the conversation of his son—but he met the Cornet frequently during the week which followed, and his good-humour on those occasions was too visible, to permit Reginald's harbouring any sort of suspicion, that he had sustained any sore disappointment in the abrupt evasion of the heiress of Grypherwast. On the contrary, there was a lightness about everything he said and looked, that satisfied his acquaintance (perhaps it would not be going too far to call Reginald his friend) that the Cornet was extremely well pleased to be delivered, by whatever accident, from the necessity of acting continually a part in which his heart had never been his prompter. Reginald saw all this, and certainly liked young Macdonald all the better for what he saw.

Rather more than a week had elapsed, and still neither Reginald nor Mr. Ward had received any information about Sir Charles Catline—but negative evidence was, in such a case, quite as good as affirmative; and they, both of them, considered it as beyond a doubt, that the dexterous Chisney, and the no less dexterous Barbara Catline, had received the blacksmith's blessing at Gretna-Green, long before the baronet had been able to come up with them.

And such was the truth. The fugitives, having travelled day and night, and having taken special care to order their relays beforehand, were married at Gretna-Green ere Sir Charles had reached Kendal. They then struck into cross-roads; and the Baronet, who, even after inspecting Vulcan's register, was anxious to continue his pursuit, soon found that their movements had been very skilfully perplexed, and that it was quite in vain to think of recovering the trace he had lost. In a word, he proceeded to Edinburgh—inserted in the newspapers a mysterious advertisement, earnestly requesting "an immediate and friendly meeting" with Chisney and his wife—wrote to Mr. Ralph Macdonald, not less earnestly, soliciting his presence in Edinburgh—and, taking lodgings at Portobello, awaited there in solitary anxiety the result of these two applications.

Reginald had not seen either of the Macdonalds for two or three days, when one morning he received a letter from Miss Hesketh, containing information which certainly very much surprised him. Ellen told

him, that Mr. Keith had, in some measure, recovered from the languid state into which he had sunk; but that he had several days ago considered it his duty to resign altogether the pastoral charge, for which it was too evident he could no more expect to recover strength. * * * "We were just considering," said she, "to what village in this neighbourhood we should retire, and I believe the end of it would have been our returning to our good friend Mrs. Wilkinson's, at Witham, when all our plans have been changed, in consequence of the arrival of Mr. Keith's friend, Mr. Macdonald of Edinburgh. You know, my dear Dalton, that, from what Mr. Keith had told us both, I had formed no very favourable idea of this gentleman. Mr. Keith thought he had behaved very unkindly, at least very unhandsomely, and I had taken up his feelings. But we have both of us great reason *now* to reproach ourselves for our rashness in judging. Mr. Macdonald came quite unexpectedly—although he told us he had been some time in London, and prevented from visiting Oxford earlier, only in consequence of business he had to attend to in the House of Lords. Mr. Keith received him at first rather distantly, and I believe I did the same; but indeed we may well be ashamed of ourselves. Never did any man behave in a more kind manner—I am really quite unable to express all that I feel—Mr. Keith himself is not kinder. He has persuaded Mr. Keith, that, now he is not tied in any way to Oxford, he will be far better in his own country than in any other; and has insisted we must both accompany him to Scotland, and spend this summer at his place in the Highlands. He has also taken occasion to hint to me, that, in case my dear uncle be taken from me, his wife will be too happy to have me under her own roof, and give me a mother's protection. Now, my dear Reginald, you know very well how much I had thought of the Yorkshire plan; but indeed Mr. Macdonald is so very kind, that, if Mrs. Macdonald be as much so, I believe I shall be persuaded. Mr. Macdonald's manners are certainly rather unpolished; but Mr. Keith says he is quite the gentleman in birth and connections; so that, I suppose, it must be merely manner. At all events, he is my guardian, in case I have that great loss; and who knows whether he may not some day have it in his power to benefit me in more ways than I can imagine.

"In the meantime, Mr. Keith has been wonderfully the better of his society. He spends almost the whole day here; and they have so many old stories to talk about, that my uncle is quite cheerful and happy when they are together. If he continues to improve as much for another week, I should not be surprised if we were to begin our journey then—but I fear, my dear Reginald, there will be but little chance of their taking London on their way. At one time, Mr. Keith talked of going down by sea, and I was in hopes that I might have seen you, if it had been but for one little hour—but Mr. Macdonald thinks, and I fear there is but too much reason for it, that a sea-voyage of that length would be a severer trial than the other way; and I dare say the end of it will be, that we shall all go down to Scotland direct from Oxford by very easy stages. Mr. Keith never mentions your name; but I am very sure he loves you as much as ever he did, notwithstanding; for he looked quite happy when he heard Mr. Macdonald praising you yesterday evening—and I need not tell you what I felt *then*. Mr. Macdonald says his son is in London, and is quite a friend of yours. I believe he is to get leave of absence from his regiment, and spend some months in Scotland this summer; so, no doubt, I shall get acquainted with him too. I think you said you had once met with Mrs. Macdonald. Pray let me hear all about her. I cannot wish her to be better or kinder than her husband; but perhaps she may be a little politer, and I hope your letter will tell me that it is so." * * *

Reginald met young Macdonald by accident on the street, in the course of the same day, and received from him another edition of almost every part of this intelligence. The Cornet did not conceal that he was very little pleased with the arrangements his father had been making, in so far as they regarded himself. He was not to join the regiment in the Peninsula until next season; but he had been anxious to spend the whole of the intervening time in England; and altogether, Reginald easily gathered, that the prospect of being subjected again to the discipline of domestic life had no charms for his imagination. The young gentleman naturally made many inquiries concerning these future guests of his father; and Reginald, in answering him, did his best endeavour not to betray anything of the profound interest, without which he could not mention even their names.

In a few days more, the Cornet came to take leave of Reginald with a considerably dejected countenance, and to ask him if he had any commands for Oxford. Reginald had written to Miss Hesketh but the day before, and at all events, he should never have dreamed of making Macdonald the confidant of that correspondence. He therefore simply requested him to carry his best wishes to all the party in St. Clement's, his father included; and in case he might be detained for a day or two there, furnished him with introductions to some of his young friends in the University, and so they parted.

The more Reginald reflected on it, the more was he surprised with the sudden change which seemed to have taken place in the elder Macdonald's manner of conducting himself towards Mr. Keith. He considered, however, that if Mr. Macdonald had met with a severe

disappointment as to a merely worldly scheme, that disappointment might have had the effects of a lesson even upon him. At all events, he could not but see that it was a far better thing for Ellen Hesketh to be placed under the protection of a respectable family, and, above all, of a respectable lady (for such from his own slight opportunities of observation, but much more from the general strain of the young Cornet's conversation in regard to his domestic relations, he conceived Mrs. Macdonald to be), than to encounter the melancholy and secluded life of an English nunnery. On the whole, it was the style of his temperament to hope, and he turned from Ellen, and the perplexities of her present fortunes, to dream of the dear, and perhaps (so he fondly imagined) the not very distant day, when he should be enabled to offer her, wherever she might be found, the consolation and protection of a love that could not change.

Ellen, meanwhile, was preparing for her long journey, with a heart divided between the sadness of parted love, the joy with which she could not but contemplate the amending health of her old guardian and friend, and that trepidation with which so young a female must needs look forward to being domesticated, how permanently she could not foresee, among a family of strangers. The first of these emotions might be, in some measure, tempered by the tone in which Reginald had been partly forcing himself to write to her about his own prospects (for, indeed, whatever gayer hopes he at other times nourished, when he was writing to Ellen melancholy was always predominant in his bosom)—and in regard to the Macdonalds, the continued kindness—indeed the all but paternal kindness—with which old Ralph treated her on all occasions, was every day lessening her natural feelings of timidity.

The young Cornet arrived in Oxford on the day immediately preceding that which was to witness the commencement of their journey. Ellen could not help auguring more and more favourably of the mother, from what she saw of the modest and gentle manners of the son ; and, on the whole, there was greatly more of the agreeable than of the painful in the journey itself. They travelled, of necessity, but a few stages each day, and Mr. Macdonald was at pains to manage it so that they generally spent the evening at some place where there were sights or recollections of interest. They saw, almost without departing from the direct line of their way, Blenheim and Woodstock, and Kenilworth and Warwick, and then proceeded through the rich and varied scenery of Derbyshire, to York. After reposing for one whole day in that famous city, they proceeded in the same leisurely manner through Durham and Northumberland ; and, having been about a fortnight on the road, reached Edinburgh in safety.

So far from being the worse of travelling, Mr. Keith was greatly better when the journey terminated than when it began. His spirits, indeed, had risen quite perceptibly from the moment they touched the soil of Scotland; and he had been, above all things, delighted with finding that Ellen Hesketh admired some of the fine scenery of the coast with an enthusiasm scarcely inferior to his own. In *that* pride, Mr. Ralph Macdonald appeared to sympathise very heartily ; but his enthusiasm broke out in a far superior strain when they caught the first glimpse of the noble capital itself. They had dined at Haddington, and Ralph had insisted on a second bottle, in honour of the approaching conclusion of the journey. He pointed to the distant castellated mass, visible against a rich and glowing horizon, and almost out-marmioned Marmion in his ecstasy. He shook Keith's hand, and said, "My dear old friend, this *is* such a pleasure," and then he pressed Ellen's, and whispered, in a tone at once solemn and affectionate,—"My dear young lady, you'll find a home yonder—I'm sure you've had your share of wandering. It *is* time that you were at home."

"At home!" said Ellen, and checked herself with a sigh.

"Ay, my bonnie lassie," said Ralph ; "and what for should ye no be at home? Ye were born here, my dear, and so were we all—and home's home, be it never so homely."

"Nay," said Ellen, smiling, "you are jesting with me now, Mr. Macdonald ; for 'tis the most beautiful landscape—almost the most beautiful, certainly, that I ever saw."

"And only *almost*, my dear? What is't, then, that ye would prefer? Nothing in Germany, I'm sure."

"Nay, indeed, sir—I am not quite so sure of that. But, I believe, you never were on the Continent?"

"Not I, i'faith, nor never mean to be, if I can help it, my dear Miss Hesketh ; and I hope you'll never be on the Continent any more, neither."

"Why, after all," says Mr. Keith, "Ellen never saw anything on the Continent so fine as the place she has left. Oxford beats the German towns clean, for that matter ; and I trow, Macdonald, Auld Reekie is before Oxford, any day of the year.'

"Oxford! my dear sir," quoth Ralph, "why, Oxford's not a city at all, man—it's just a wheen Colleges planted thick thegither, wi' kirks, and leebraries, and observatories, and steeples, and what not—But as for a city, why, there's not even the look o' ane aboot it. Give me folk in a town, say I—I like the bustle and whirr o' population about a city—What signifies a wheen tutors and laddies gaun stoiting about wi' gowns and square trenchers?—Useless havers!—Na, na, Miss Ellen, my dear, you look down the now, and I see you doubt what I'm saying ; but ye

shall see a city indeed, ere ye're an hour aulder.—Oxford, indeed!"—

"—And Oxford could have been nothing but a dull place for you, my dear," he resumed, after a little pause—"a very dull place, I'm sure, and noways suitable for a young leddy. No company—no diversion—clean out of the world—and that's no the thing for ony young leddy, and, least of a'—but I mauna meddle wi' compliments, Miss Ellen—that's no my trade—Oor day's past for that, Mr. Keith—We must leave that to the rising generation, my dear. If Tam, there, had a tongue in his head—but no matter, no matter."

The old gentleman continued talking in this sort of strain until they were fairly in the city. Mr. Keith, as they drove even through the old streets which first received them, could not refrain from exclaiming upon the wonderful improvements that had everywhere taken place since he was last in Edinburgh; but when they passed the Bridge, and the whole New Town burst upon their view, his astonishment was silent. Mr. Macdonald sat eyeing him in silence too, but with a smile that was eloquent enough to express his calm and superior triumph.

The carriage stopped at the door of a very handsome house in Queen Street. "Are we at the end of our journey?" says Keith.

"Ay, indeed, are we," says Ralph; "and I hope you'll like your quarters none the worse, though I believe ye may have shot a snipe where my dining-table stands." And with this he handed Miss Hesketh out of the carriage, bidding her welcome anew, with all the old Scotch ceremonial of cordiality, so soon as he had conducted her beyond his threshold.

When Reginald Dalton was introduced to Mrs. Macdonald at Thorwold Hall, the reader may remember that he was considerably surprised with the contrast which the elegance of that lady's appearance presented, to the rough exterior of her lord. Reginald had prepared Ellen Hesketh in so far, and yet even the expectations his account had excited were surpassed. She found herself welcomed not only graciously, but gracefully. Mrs. Macdonald, in truth, received Ellen not a whit less kindly than if she had been some forlorn young kinswoman of her own; and there was a ladylike softness about all her attentions, which could not fail to be very charming, more especially to one who had for so long a period been separated from any congenial society of her own sex.

There was a slight tinge of affectation about Mrs. Macdonald. She was, or supposed herself to be, something of a literary character, and did not always conceal a certain contempt for her husband's evident and avowed indifference, or rather perhaps scorn, in regard to all such matters as interested her imagination. Her son, too, sometimes shocked her a little by his want of sympathy in this style; yet it was evident that there could not be a more affectionate mother. The Cornet's return had been a thing she did not expect until but a few days before they arrived, and the presence of her only child was, of course, a delightful gratification to her. Mr. Keith had been in some sort an old acquaintance—she seconded, with ready zeal, her husband's efforts to make the old gentleman feel at home beneath her roof. Ralph himself was happy in being restored to his own fireside, and in spite of a few occasional differences of opinion, he seemed to be fond of his wife, and delighted with everything about him. Altogether, the party was a happy one, and, in spite of all its pensiveness, Ellen's gentle heart could not refuse to participate in the pleasure that sat on every countenance about her.

Mrs. Macdonald, on her part, was half in love with Ellen ere the party broke up for the night. She conducted her to her bed-room, and lingered with her there for some time. It was bright moon-light, and the noble Frith, and the beautiful outline of the coast of Fife, were visible quite distinctly from the windows of this apartment. Mrs. Macdonald pointed to the distant hills over the sea, and told Ellen that it was *there* she had been born, and then talked of her mother, of whom it seemed she had seen a little, although she had been absent from St. Andrews during the months that immediately preceded her death. "And, indeed, my dear," said she, "you are as like what she was then as is possible, only the dress was so different in those days, and your mother's sweet face was a more melancholy one than I trust you will ever wear."

Ellen sighed at the mention of that sad mystery, and looked wistfully in the kind lady's face.

"I see what you mean, my dear," said she,—"But indeed I know nothing more of the matter than yourself. I never saw Mr. Hesketh—he was gone from St. Andrews ere I became acquainted with your mother, and Mr. Macdonald has told me as little as any one else, I believe, about the matter. Perhaps he himself knows not much of it. If he does, I am sure he must have made some promise which it is impossible he should ever break."

"I do not desire to know anything of it," said Ellen, and her pale lip trembled as she said the words. "How can I desire to know anything of such a man—such a parent? My dear Mrs. Macdonald, I would rather be an orphan as I am, than find such a father;—and yet sometimes I cannot but think that one day or other——I have a presentiment, a fear I should say—but I'm foolish to say this, and you are too kind."

"Nay, my love," said Mrs. Macdonald, "you must not speak about kindness. God knows, I have often wished, when I heard of all Mr. Keith's wanderings, that Mr. Macdonald had taken you home to our house

from the beginning. But we must not play sad now, my dear. I hope you will be happy here."

"I am sure I shall," said Ellen. "If I be not, the fault must be my own."

"'Tis well you have been used to a quiet life, my dear Miss Hesketh, for I fear you will have rather a dull one, at least, in the summer time, with us. Here, to be sure, there is no want of company, but we go to Glenstroan in a few weeks, and there we are twenty miles, and a ferry besides, from our nearest neighbour; and poor Tom, I suppose they'll scarcely allow him to go with us. We shall be a very quiet circle, I promise you, from July to November."

"So much the better," says Ellen. "Only think of what I've been accustomed to."

"Well, well, my dear, we shall always have our books and our walks, you know? and, in the mean time, do you get into bed and take a good sleep, for you've had a very long journey." With this Mrs. Macdonald kissed Ellen very tenderly, and they parted.

CHAPTER XLIX.

A YOUTHFUL LOVER.

MR. KEITH was visited, immediately after his arrival in Edinburgh, by several old acquaintances, in whose society he passed great part of his time during the two or three ensuing weeks. His infirmities not permitting him to walk abroad, he generally received his friends in his apartment at Mr. Macdonald's; and his host was continually making parties, expressly for the purpose of amusing and gratifying the old invalid. Ellen, in the mean time, continued to be treated in the kindest possible manner by Mrs. Macdonald; and such is the gentle courage of an innocent female heart, that in spite of the secret griefs which sometimes overpowered her when she was left alone, she was able, in the presence of that lady, and among the friendly and cheerful circle that surrounded her, to wear the aspect, not only of resignation and composure, but even of a sober happiness, and a quiet gaiety.

The young Cornet had no occupation of business, and as but few idle young people remain in Edinburgh at that season of the year, he might perhaps have found his mode of life a little tedious, had the domestic circle received no reinforcement. But the fair Ellen was here, and she was a stranger, and upon him naturally devolved the duty of making her acquainted with the different objects of interest in the city and its neighbourhood. Mrs. Macdonald accompanied him and Ellen in many of their walks; but these were not unfrequently extended to distances rather unsuitable for an elderly lady's exertions. Ellen, light and active, thought nothing of climbing Arthur's Seat. Braid, Corstorphine hill, the sea-shore, were all of them easily within her reach, and all of them became favourites. In short, scarcely a day passed but she and her unfailing squire spent several hours together in this way; and, to say truth, although she was introduced to abundance of young gentlemen, and found no lack of attention among them, there was a certain modesty and simplicity about Tom Macdonald that pleased her far better than anything she met with elsewhere. He was naturally bashful, and the brief experience he had made of English life had been quite insufficient to cure him of this. On the whole, therefore, he was one of that class of very young men, who find it an extremely difficult thing to make acquaintance with very young women. But everything has its counterpoise in these matters; and the more slow he was in gaining any such intimacy, the more delightful, of course, it was when gained; and this was one which it was impossible he should have avoided gaining. During a fortnight they had been fellow-travellers; and now they were living under the same roof, members of the same family, and the only young members of it too. Ellen, her serious affections engaged far away, behaved to him with a degree of easy frankness, which perhaps no young lady, whose heart was entirely in her own keeping, would have ventured to assume upon so brief an acquaintance. In truth, his first shyness had made her consider him, rather more than she might otherwise have done, as a boy, and this, too, might have diminished her reserve; while he, on the other hand, knowing but little of man, and less of woman, never thought of speculating upon Ellen's behaviour to him, or scrutinising into the motives of its freedom; but gave himself up with the open ardour of a young and unpractised bosom, to enjoy what must have been abundantly charming to any one, but what all the circumstances of his temper and situation conspired to invest with double fascinations for him. Of the mystery which hung over Ellen's earlier history, the Cornet had received some hints from his mother; and this, it need not be said, added a certain romantic depth to the interest with which he regarded her — but why talk of romantic interest?—Nature alone had been enough. Ellen Hesketh was young —even had she not been beautiful, she was young, innocent, affectionate, and modest; and where is the unsophisticated stripling that could have resisted all these charms, even had beauty, and the overwhelming charm of beauty, been wanting?

But she *was* beautiful—exquisitely beautiful —the radiance of virgin glee had been chastened, not eclipsed, within her dark, rich, downcast eyes—her cheek had not the steady bloom of rejoicing and dancing blood, the ensign of unchastised mirth, the flush and

exuberant voluptuousness of a heart lapt in ease—but its paleness had nothing of the cold about it ;—the blush that durst not rest there hovered within view, and now and then mantled for a moment with a rosy gleam, that which even in marble whiteness had been lovely.—Young Macdonald had, in obedience to his father, tried to make love, and he had even tried to feel it ;—but to love—unbidden, unsuggested, unprompted, unconscious love—the pure true passion that lives and dreams—he had been a stranger. Perhaps he would not have fallen in love even with Ellen Hesketh, had it not been his fortune to find himself domesticated under the same roof with her. People talk of balls, routs, operas, and gay parties—but these, after all, are not the true scenes. One goes to these warned, prepared, armed. Your guerilla warfare is the true strategy of love—and one calm glance, or one confidential whisper, at the fireside, is worth all the radiant smiles, and all the no-meaning whispers of fifty saloons.—Hannah More preaches against play-going and waltzing ; but Mrs. Cœlebs is a knowing lady, and must be quite aware, that young hearts encounter far more danger in the course of a single quiet stroll in the fields, in a fine summer's evening, than ever haunted the crowded and glowing atmosphere of theatre or ball-room. Indeed, I remember no love worth the mentioning, that began under these last auspices, except only that of Romeo and Juliet—and there, be it remembered, they were both of them, not young people, but children ; and the girl, if we may judge from what we are permitted to see of her nurse, one that had been accustomed to a very improper style of conversation. And after all, even *they* wore masks, and flirted in a corner, and knew they were doing wrong.

CHAPTER L.

A KINDLY REFUSAL KINDLY TA'EN.

THE Cornet loved Ellen—and he at last knew that he loved her ; but he was withheld, by a thousand scruples, from venturing to declare the passion which had taken possession of his open and artless bosom. The behaviour of Ellen herself perplexed him. She was so kind, that the one moment he almost persuaded himself her heart was disposed to respond to the movements of his. She was so frank and so calm, that the next instant he dreaded the notion of destroying, by rashness, the delightful species of intercourse of which he was already in possession.

But perhaps his father perplexed him as much—in a very different way to be sure—as Miss Hesketh herself. The old gentleman's conduct towards the young lady was such a mixture of affection and respectfulness—he seemed to watch her looks with an eye of such gentle deference—and over everything he said and did when in her presence, there was diffused such an unwonted blandness of courtesy and gallantry, that the Cornet could not help imagining it was impossible his father should think otherwise than favourably of an alliance with one who carried about her a charm capable of producing so uncommon a change on his whole aspect and demeanour. Before her, it seemed as if the coarser elements of his nature were rebuked into slumber—his brow had dismissed its furrows—the craft had fled from his eye—sincerity was in every smile and in every tone of his voice. Yet, when the young man retraced to himself the history of his recent expedition to London—when he recollected with what cold, determined calculation his father had urged him to woo Miss Catline—with what persevering diligence he had stimulated, goaded him in every stage of a pursuit, of which, from the beginning, he had avowed his dislike—above all, with what dark and sullen ire his behaviour had been marked at the moment when that pursuit was at once cut short, and baffled, and disappointed ;—when he thought of all this, and indeed of almost everything that he had ever had occasion to see and to know of his father's character and opinions, how could he help regarding it as at least a very possible thing that the old man might consider Ellen Hesketh as a most charming young lady, and yet hear with the most implacable scorn of his son's forming such a connection with one, who could bring with her no advantages either to his fortune or his ambition ?

Between these hopes and fears the young soldier hesitated long. In the mean time, his own behaviour towards Ellen was involuntarily becoming every day more and more unlike what it had used to be. The habit of their walking out together had been so completely formed, that it could scarcely have been interrupted now, without exciting attention and inquiry ; and, at any rate, while he could not look forward to being alone with Ellen without a certain sort of tremor, to lose that, when the moment came, would have been pain intolerable. They did, therefore, as usual, continue to be for hours together every day, but the Cornet walked silent, or absent, beside Ellen—sometimes a confession trembling on his lips, and then the blood driven back chill to his heart again, by some look or smile of hers, that he could not avoid considering as the index of a bosom by far too sadly placid, to be sympathising with his own. Once or twice he had worked himself up to the point, and was just ready to say something that could never have been unsaid, when the calmness and serenity of her pensive countenance met his full gaze, and unnerved it. He shrunk into himself, and trembled to think how near he had been to the precipice ; and yet that indescribable fascination drew him back again

and again—and at last the hour came, and it could be resisted no longer.

They had walked side by side towards the coast, and were sitting together upon the rocks in a very solitary situation, not far from Carline Park. The day was a fair and still one, but the sky was cloudy, and every now and then a heavy breath of wind came from the sea, and made melancholy music, for an instant, among the branches of the old elms behind them. The sea was calm, but the atmosphere seemed to press upon it, and it lay divided into broad lines, alternately dark and gleaming. The opposite coast of Fife appeared nearer than it really was, the hills larger and gloomier than Ellen had ever seen them. The poor girl had received a long and rather doleful letter from Reginald Dalton, the same morning; and while Macdonald sat gazing by starts upon her, and then stooping down and playing with the pebbles, she, her cheek resting on her hand, kept her eyes fixed, with a sad and dreaming seriousness, upon the melancholy waste of waters before her. Quite abruptly, her companion laid his hand upon hers, and said, "Ellen, what are you thinking of?"

He had never been used to call her by her name so, and she was a little surprised; and, conscious of what her thoughts had been, she blushed without making any answer.

The young man saw her blush, and he dared to hope; and, without giving himself time to ponder any more, broke out at once with a declaration so passionate, and yet so modest, that she could not hear it without the deepest affliction. The truth flashed upon her—she, guarded herself, had never thought of love and him together; and the style of her behaviour to him had been such as no young woman, whose affections were engaged, ought to have adopted towards so young and so inexperienced a man. He had been mistaken — the fault was partly hers — a tear sprung into her eye, and she could not withdraw the hand which he had taken.

She remained in perfect silence—the blush had deserted her cheek—she met his eye, his ardent, bashful, anxious eye—the tears gushed from hers—she stooped, and the drops fell upon his hand.

He began to speak again—but ere he had said two words, she struggled herself into composure, and rose from beside him. "My dear Mr. Macdonald," said she, "you cannot know what grief you have filled my heart with. This is no time for coquetries—I feel your too great kindness—I blush to think of your goodness—all that I can do I will do, and that is to be honest. I am grateful, most grateful—but we must both forget what has been said here—I am not mistress of myself, and yet it would be a sin if I hesitated to tell you the whole truth of it—I have—I have an engagement."

Macdonald sprung to his feet, and said, "Miss Hesketh, I have done you wrong. I had no right to extort this from you.—Can you forgive my rashness?"

"Talk not of forgiveness, my dear Mr. Macdonald. Can you forgive me?—Oh, sir, we are not to give over being friends?"

"Friends! Miss Hesketh. You are engaged to be married? Good God! What right have I to speak to you? Good God! I have given you pain."

"I have given *you* pain, Mr. Macdonald—let me give you no more. You are a gentleman, and you have my secret—I know 'tis safe with you. Let us not say a word more about that—we are friends. My heart cannot refuse to be touched with the high compliment you have paid me.—Love is not mine to give you.—Be assured that you shall ever have in me a friend, if you will let me say the word—a sister."

Macdonald had been quite thrown out by the first shock of that which Ellen's candour prompted her to reveal to him so abruptly.—The young man stared and stammered for a few seconds, not apparently understanding what Ellen was saying to him; but he met once more her eye fixed upon him seriously, kindly, modestly—and he made a bold effort, and was himself—more than himself.—"Miss Hesketh," said he, taking the young lady's hand again, "I can scarcely expect that you should just at this moment give me credit when I tell you so—and yet it is true—yes, Ma'am, I am perfectly calm—you see in me your friend, your brother—all that, dear Ellen, and no more——. Convince me that you believe what I say—convince me that my folly *is* forgiven and forgotten—make a friend of me, indeed—tell me how I can serve you, or——"

Ellen sighed, and cast down her eyes.

"——You," he proceeded,—"or the happiest man in the world—one that I doubt not deserves to be so, since he is your choice."

"Mr. Macdonald, you overpower me—pity me, Mr. Macdonald—I am the most unhappy creature in the world——"

"Unhappy?—Ellen unhappy?—I have no right to say so—but once more, *can* I serve you?"

"You are too good, too kind, too generous—all the world is too good to me—and yet, wherever I go I am the cause of pain—oh, Mr. Macdonald, let us return to town—let us be calm—let us be silent."—

He drew her arm within his, and they began walking—after a pause of some minutes, the Cornet stopped again, and said, looking Ellen in the face with an air of sincere and manly humility,—"I know you do me justice, more than justice — I know that you will never dream of anything unworthy—I know that you will never suspect me of asking questions from curiosity—I know that you love, and I see that you are here alone and unhappy—Is there anything I can do for you?—Can I say anything for you?—Can I remove, or help to

remove, any difficulties?—To see you happy would be happiness for me—"

Ellen gazed upon the boy again. She blushed, and then the blood rushed to her very lips—she gently returned the pressure of his hand, and tried, but tried in vain, to say a single word in answer.

"My dearest Miss Hesketh," said he, "you know not what I suffer—It is all my doing, and yet yours is the pain—Believe me, I have washed my heart—I should hear your lover's name with no feeling except the desire of knowing him, that for your sake and for his own I might love him—and, perhaps, young as I am, I may have something in my power—"

Ellen shook her head, and then forcing a melancholy enough smile, said, "My dear friend, be assured that if I had a favour to ask, it should be of you I would ask it—but I cannot just now tell you so long a story and so sad a one. Hereafter the time may come—"

"The time may come?—nay, my dear Ellen, the time must come; that is, if you meant to speak of the time when you are to be happy—"

Ellen looked to the sea, and murmured something—"Unfortunate, say you?—How unfortunate?"—

"Every way, every way."—

"Nay, but you whispered that I knew him?"

"Yes, I did. O, Mr. Macdonald, will you force me to do this?—And yet, what is the reason why I should hesitate with you? God knows, I feel that I can never make sufficient atonement. The young man I mentioned is unfortunate here, and is going abroad. Perhaps the world may look more kindly upon him, poor fellow—"

"Dalton?" said Macdonald, in a whisper.

Ellen nodded gravely, and then, feeling her face burn, turned it away from him towards the sea.

Involuntarily perhaps they both quickened their pace; but it was a long while ere any more words passed between them. Ellen at last made an exertion, and said something about the view of Edinburgh which was just opening upon them. Tom answered quite wide of the mark, and then, perceiving he had done so, coloured and bit his lip. "It is in vain," said he, after a moment, "it is quite in vain, Miss Hesketh—I cannot listen even to you—I know Mr. Dalton—I think I may say that I know him—I know his misfortunes too—I know that a miserable series of accidents have conspired to deprive him of what should have been his. O, Miss Hesketh, I could tell you such a story; for I dare say even he does not know all the work that has been carried on.—But this is not the time, nor, if it were, would it be of any use. I know Dalton—I respect him—I love him—I loved him before and *now*—but I must restrain myself. From all that I have heard, he is likely to succeed very well in India. Would to God he could have stayed, but that is impossible."

"My dear Mr. Macdonald," said Ellen, "we are all very young, and let us hope that good days are before us all yet."

"I pray God you may be happy together," said Macdonald, very solemnly; "that is—that shall be—both my hope and my prayer. You can't go—you don't think of going to India?"

"No, no," said Ellen, faintly smiling, "we are not quite come to that yet. But, my dear Mr. Macdonald, you have not heard the whole of my story. Be assured I feel in the most sensible manner the deep and sincere kindness that made you wish to hear it; but you now *must* see, that what I have said was said only because I could not think of leaving anything unsaid that you wished to hear—you must see that no good can come of our returning again to the subject—and I am sure you will not do so."—

"If you find at any time that I have anything in my power, you *will* apply to me—you will gratify me by treating me as a true friend?"

"I will," said Ellen, fervently. "I give you my word I will."

"Enough," said Macdonald—and this was the last of their conversation. They continued to walk at a rapid pace until they reached Queen-street, each doubtless having thoughts enough, though they were perhaps more fitted to lengthen than to beguile the way. They entered Mr. Macdonald's together; and at the door of the drawing-room the Cornet and Ellen shook hands and parted. Tom met his father coming down-stairs the next instant, and the old gentleman clapped him on the shoulder with an air of more than common benignity, saying, "Come, come, Tom, you and Ellen maun learn to keep better hours wi' your walks—but never heed, never heed — come your ways down again directly, and I'll tell them to be dishing the dinner."

"I had no idea it was so late," said Tom, looking at his watch with an air of some confusion.

"Hoots, hoots, never fash your thumb, Tom; it's a' weel that ends weel—and we're to be a' by ourselves, for the Priest, he's out at his dinner."—

CHAPTER LI.

A MYSTERY SOLVED.

THE Cornet's mind was in such a state of agitation, that he would most gladly have been allowed to remain for a while by himself, to cool and compose him; but the dinner-bell rung almost immediately, and he had

barely time to dip his face and hands in cold water, ere he was obliged to join the party below. This, as we have seen, consisted only of Ellen, and his father and mother—but, in some cases, there is nothing so trying as a very small company, and certainly the poor Cornet's was one of these. However, he tried to make the best of it; and although his nerves had undergone a shake, which prevented him from making anything like his usual figure with the knife and fork, it so happened that Miss Hesketh's deficiency of appetite was at least as remarkable, and that attracted so much both of Mr. Macdonald's attention and his wife's, that Tom found means to escape almost entirely without notice.

The ladies had no sooner retired than Mr. Macdonald said to his son, "Come, Tam, it's but seldom we twa are left by ourselves now-a-days—there's twa three little matters I would fain have some crack wi' you about—and ye may e'en take the key, and bring up a bottle of whatever ye like best—we'll maybe hae a health or twa that it will be but decent to drink in claret.—E'en take the third binn on the left hand, Tam."

The Cornet obeyed, and when he returned to the dining-room with the magnum, found his father established in his easy-chair, in an attitude of more than common luxury. The old gentleman filled both glasses to the brim, and nodding with a very knowing look, drained his own to the last drop. He then sat rubbing his hand upon his leg for a minute or two, and at last filled himself another bumper, saying, "That's true, Tam, lad, we had forgotten our manners—The Ladies!"

Tom accepted the pledge in some confusion—indeed, for the last two hours, his complexion had been continually changing, in a style quite unusual with him—all which, however he had concealed his observation, had, in reality, by no means escaped the perspicacious optics of Glenstroan.

"She's a charming young woman, isn't she, Tam?" quoth the senior.

"Who, father? I beg your pardon——"

Glenstroan drew his hand over his lips, as if to conceal a smile that had rather prematurely mantled them—coughed once or twice through his fingers, and whispered, "Na, na, Tam, ye're a perfect fox turned—Wha *could* I be speaking of?"

"Father!"—said the Cornet, staring at him.

"Son!"—he answered, with a grin that discovered all the teeth still in his possession.—Tom's blush deepened and spread, beneath the steady gaze to which he felt himself exposed.

"My dear Thomas," said the old man, suddenly assuming an expression of more sober benignity, "It's high time that we should gie ower a' this wark—I see, and have seen, more than enough for my turn. Miss Hesketh is a lovely creature, Tom—she is indeed a sweet lassie, and as modest as she's bonny. After all, it must be conceded, that Miss Catline was nothing till her."

Tom smiled, in spite of himself, at hearing his father disparage the so recent object of all his adulations and commendations. The crafty senior read his thoughts in a moment, and gulped a bumper. "Tam Macdonald," quoth he, setting down the glass with rather a solemn air—"Tam Macdonald, I see what's been passing within you. Answer me one thing, my boy—do you think I love you?"

"Can I doubt it, father?—How can you ask such a question?"

"And how could you look such a look, Tam?—But come, come, what signifies palavering. If ye ever doubted what my motive was, ye'll do me justice belive. In the mean time, Tam, I have had a deal of distress lately about a friend of mine—I need not mention names—but I just wanted to let you hear the story, and to hear what you would say about it. Ye have a great share o' common sense, my dear lad, and I really just wish to have your opinion."

"Indeed, father," said the Cornet, "I fear you are paying me compliments I don't deserve. You know very well that I am no judge about matters of business."

"Na, na, Tam—there's to be nae talk o' compliments atween us—but, to tell you the truth, 'tis no quite a matter of business neither, but rather just a point for common human discretion, and sagacity, and sound feeling. I'm going to tell you a plain story, Tam, and I expect no more than I'm very sure ye *can* gie me—a plain comment. The story," he proceeded, "is very shortly this:—A friend of mine, a gentleman, a man of family, and now at least of some fortune too, had occasion, a great many years ago, to be of great use to an English gentleman, of some rank and distinction, in a very delicate matter—a most extremely delicate affair, as can well be imagined. Well, things go on, and it turns out, that, in course of time, the Englishman has it in his power to return the obligation, without in the smallest degree injuring, or even inconveniencing, himself. The thing is proposed, sir—proposed and agreed to, and everything goes on as smoothly as possible for a time; but just when my friend is considering the matter as perfectly fixed and settled, he discovers that he has been played with, sir—most treacherously played with. His friend—his seeming and professing friend—is a scoundrel—a base, infamous, cunning rascal—he has been deceiving him all along—the whole plan is blown up at once, and he has nothing but a few fair speeches given him, by way of amends.—What think you of this conduct, Tom? Speak—tell me what you think of it."

"I think very badly of it indeed, sir," says the Cornet; "but you have told the story so generally, that I confess I am not able to see

more than what lies on the very surface. You say there was treachery—how can treachery be anything but bad?"

"Right, Tom—I see you have the proper feeling about you, man. How can any man hold up his face to defend a long-ravelled web of cunning, treacherous dissimulation, and ingratitude?"

"Nobody, surely, father—nobody but one that would do the like himself, if he had the temptation and the opportunity."

"Right again, Tam—quite right, my dear boy. I see we go together in every point—but what's my friend to do?—What is he to do, Tam?"

"Nay, nay, father—that's a question which I cannot answer indeed. I don't know anything of the nature of the provocation—nothing more, I mean, than what is quite loose and general—it must depend entirely upon the circumstances, whether he should call him out or no."

"Call him out or no?—hoots, hoots, Mister Cornet o' the Blues.—There's nothing o' calling out here, I promise ye.—My friend's an elderly man, head of a family, elder of the kirk—a man considered in society, Tam—a person quite out of the way of such havering ploys."

"Nay, then—I suppose he must just consider with himself, whether he has or has not proper grounds for an action of damages—and whether, if he has, it is or is not worth his while, and suitable to his character, to take advantage of them. Everything, father, must depend upon the particular nature of the case. It is quite impossible, that your friend should not be the best judge in such an affair for himself."

"Ay, Tam—and it's even so, man. My friend *is* the best judge of his own affair—and he *has* judged—and he has come to a very proper judgment."

"Then why consult other people, father?"

"Ha, ha, Tam—an' ye might say that, if this were a world where a man could always do his own turn wi' his own fingers—but 'tis not so, Tam—we're a' linked thegither—we must stand or fa' wi' our friends. In many situations, the best single arm is nothing—ay, and the best single head is nothing too—do you follow me?"

"Your friend wants assistance—I'm sure, father, if 'tis anything that I can do for him, *you* need not have hesitated to vouch for me. Can I be of any use to your friend?—I beg you would make no words, but just tell me at once what I can do?"

"Na, na—we're ower fast now, Tam Macdonald.—But come, come, fill your glass again, Tam—I believe the best way will be to speak plain at once—Tam Macdonald, I am your father——"

"Oh, sir, why do you look so?—There has nothing happened to *you?*"

Tam Macdonald, I am your father—you are my only son—my only child—we have sometimes had our little word of difference; but I think I may say, that we have been father and son all our time——"

"My dear father, you distress me——"

"Come now, Tam, listen to what I am saying—you're my good boy, and I know what I have to trust to. You know very well, Tam, that I began the world poorly enough; you know that I have laboured, and that I have thriven; and you know very well that I value all I have, only because I have you to look forward to—I have not been slaving for myself, Tam."

"You are too good, sir. Indeed, father, you are distressing me—you are strong and healthy—you have laboured, and you have a right to repose and enjoyment, and you will have a very long time of them both."

"You're my ain dear callant—but oh, Tam, ye canna ken what a father's heart is—ye'll ken that, too, in your time, and then ye'll think of me. But to the business.—Tam, I am your father, and I have been injured."

"*You*, father?—*you* injured?—What? how?—Who is it?—Name the man!"

"Softly, softly, Tam—we must take things gently—*suaviter in modo—fortiter in re*——"

"But speak, tell me what I can do? It was of yourself you were speaking all this while. Who is this scoundrel that has deceived you? Can *I* do anything?—Heavens, father——"

"Wheest, wheest—hoolie and fairly, Tam Macdonald. The story is just this.—Your father has been cruelly abused.—Will you assist him?"

"*Will* I assist him!"

"Ay, will you show yourself to be a son indeed?"

"Do I not owe you my existence, my life, my blood, everything?"

"Will you assist your father in his *revenge?*" said the old man, half rising in his seat.

"Speak," says the son—"command me—I am yours—all yours."

"And will nothing draw you from my side, Tom?—May I depend upon you indeed?"

"As the heart on the arm—as the arm on the sword."

"Enough, my boy; and so far for me. It will not change the matter for the worse for me, nor for the better to him, that *you* have been ill used—ay, you yourself—you as well as your father."

"*Me* ill used?—Heavens, father, I cannot understand you! Surely there has been enough of this mystery. Tell me the truth at once. If I *am* to hear it——"

"You shall hear it. Thomas Macdonald, we have both been abused—there is a glorious revenge within our reach—you *can* do the thing."

"Heavens, father, do you doubt me?—Do you think I shall hesitate?—Do you think so

poorly of me, as to suppose that I shall shrink from any danger?"

"Danger?—But I see how it is—ye're dreaming about your duelling again. Shall I never convince you, that this is a serious business, and none of your *rows*, you fool!—None of your silly squabbles among boys, that boys are so ready to shed their bluid upon? Come, Tom, I have laid aside the father. I am treating you as one friend treats another. You are a man, and I beg you to think, and speak, ay, and *act* like a man."

"Try me—I am ready."

"And so am I," quoth the senior, "and so is everything. Can you guess the name of the man that I hate?"

"Me? how? how should I?"

"How should you? how should you *not?* Who is it that has injured you and me?"

"Who, father?—Who is it?—Can I divine?"

"Divine?—Come, come, you're playing with your father, boy. You know what has happened—you know how Sir Charles——"

"Sir Charles?—Sir Charles Catline?"

"Ay, Sir Charles Catline," whispered Glenstroan—"if you have heard of such a gentleman."

"And he?—Indeed, father, I am altogether in the dark. Do you allude to the late affair?—If so, I beg you will not do so again. I thought you had agreed with me, that, after all, it was not *his* fault; nay, I thought you had even agreed with me in something more than that."

"You're a hasty callant, Tam—ye do not know what you're speaking about. I told you, long ago I told you, that I had served Sir Charles Catline—that, but for me, he had long ago been a gone man, clean gone—that it was agreed between us, you should be married to his daughter—and you do not need me to put ye in mind o' the upshot."

"Come, father, since you *have* spoken again upon a subject, of which I had hoped to hear no more, it is my part to speak my mind too about it; and I trust this will be the last time it will ever be alluded to by either the one or the other of us. I never loved Miss Catline—I rejoice that she did not take me—I consider the moment when she made her elopement, as the most fortunate one in my life.—I see that you are angry with me, father, and I am most sorry for it; but if you remember, you spoke to me *once* as if you had looked at all that matter in the same way with myself."

"Me look in the same way with yourself?" says Macdonald, half whistling with indignation—"*Me* look at all that matter like you, Cornet Thomas?—My word, you're no blate to say so, however, young man."

"I entreat your pardon, father. God knows, I said but what I thought. I had mistaken you, I find; but, at any rate, what signifies this now?—The affair is over—past and gone; and for God's sake, let it be buried. If you would oblige me seriously, let it be buried and forgotten."

"You know not what you're speaking of. It *does* signify now—the affair is *not* over—it is *not* past and gone—and it shall *not* be buried—and that shall *not* be forgotten, which never *can* be forgiven."

"Good God, father, I cannot understand your heat!"

"You can't?" says the old man—"you can't?—Thomas Macdonald," he proceeded, after pausing for a minute, "I believe I have been putting the cart before the horse, my lad—I believe I have trusted too much to generals.—Are you calm enough to listen to the real particulars of a story that I have never told to any mortal yet, and which nothing but the most deadly provocation could have induced me to unfold even to you?"

"I am perfectly calm, father, and I hope I have not been otherwise. I beg you to begin at once."

"Yes, Tom, I may begin the matter; but, ere I do so, I give you fair warning, it is you that must end it. I take it for granted, you know little or nothing of Sir Charles Catline's early history——"

"I know nothing of any part of his history, except what I have heard from yourself."

"Then you know nothing at all of it—for, two months ago, I was the last man that would have trusted myself to say one word to the purpose about him.—You must know that he has been a rascal all his days. The truth of it has but lately flashed upon me. I was deceived in so far, like the rest of the world; but now I understand him, and I believe the world will do that too, ere long be.

"The first time I saw him," he proceeded, "was in the Ninety—I could tell you the very day, if I had my book here; but, however, it was about the end of August, or beginning of September, in that year. He was a gay young man then, and he had come down to Scotland on a very shameful expedition with an innocent young woman, whom he had inveigled away from her friends. He found that it was absolutely necessary to please her with something in the shape of a wedding, and he came to me to arrange the thing—and what could I say, Tom?—Arrange it I did. I told him how the law stood in this country, and I made the lady understand that also; and, not to waste words, Tom, they exchanged writings in my presence, and were as well married ere next morning as if they had been three Sundays cried in the High Kirk. So far well—But what was the upshot? Why, you must know that all this time Catline was poorly enough off as to the pocket, and his chief expectations rested on an old uncle, an Admiral, a Sir William Catline, whose title he behoved to inherit; but as to the land and money, they were the old man's, to do whatever he liked with them.

The auld body was in a failing way, and Catline had reason to be afraid he was surrounded with some gay designing chields; and, besides, he had other affairs to look after, so he made a run (that was all he said it was to be) up to England, leaving the lassie at St. Andrews, in some sort under my management. Your mother saw her once or twice, but that was all; for, as it happened, that was the year your grandmother died, and she was a great deal more at Aberdeen, looking after and attending on her in her illness, than wi' me. But that's nothing to the story—I need not trouble you nor myself with all the circumbendibuses of it; but, in short, Catline stayed away week after week, and month after month, and at last the Admiral dies, and he finds himself cut off with nothing but his baronetship, which he could not keep from him, and Little Pyesworth, that you saw last year, with a farm or two about the house—a perfect trifle, nothing at all either to what he had been expecting, or indeed to the rank which he behoved to keep up. The will was a' right and tight, however—de'il a flaw to stick a thumb and a finger through, and something must be done.

"He was young and handsome, and there was at least one way that the very matter of the title might have been of use to him, but for the Scotch wedding—that was the rub, Tom. His hands were tied up, but nobody knew of that in England; and, foul fa' him, it fell into his fancy that he might have the art to get over the difficulty—persuade the poor lassie he had carried away to keep herself quiet, and be contented to let him try his fortune with some English heiress. He wrote to me upon that subject—very darkly and cunningly, you may well believe—but still the drift was plain enough. I saw what he was after—I saw clearly what devilish imaginations he had got into."

"Scoundrel, indeed!" cries Thomas. "O, father, how could you know all this, and yet make this man your friend?"

"My friend?—hold your tongue, callant, and you shall hear what sort of a friend he has been. I would neither meddle nor make in the matter. I wrote him, telling him what I thought of his plans, and rebuking him, as ye may guess, pretty tightly; but I would never say one word, as he had visibly wished me to do, to the poor young woman. He, however, went on in his own way—he continued in England—sent a little money down now and then, but wrote seldomer and seldomer, until at last the lady became quite broken-hearted wi' his behaviour; and, to make bad worse, he had not been long away ere the unfortunate young creature found herself with bairn, and she was sickly and pining, and every day more so;—and what could I do, Tom? I had promised to keep their secret, and unless she at least had released me on that head, what could I do?"

"And she would not?"

"Not she, not she—her spirit was high, in spite of all her distress. I believe she would not have cared a straw for anything that could happen her, if she had only had the least inkling that he really wished to be quit of her—and the end showed that, I trow."

"She died?"

"Ay, Tom, she died. I was not in St. Andrews at the time."

"St. Andrews?"

"Ay, St. Andrews, to be sure—where should it have been? You know well enough we lived in St. Andrews in these days. I was away on some business, however, and when I came back, it was all over. She had gone to visit in a friend's house, and I believe—for indeed I never could be quite sure of it—but I believe she had happened to see some paragraph in a paper about a report of a marriage between Catline and a rich lady in the North of England. There *was* such a paragraph in the papers about that time, however, and I know that it was reading the papers she was taken ill—she was seized with the pains some weeks afore the time; and, in short, Thomas, the poor thing had a very ill turn of it, and she was brought-to-bed, and died in the course of a few hours afterwards—a melancholy story, Tom!"

"Melancholy, indeed, father. But answer me one question—something has been gleaming upon me—Did she go by her right name in St. Andrews?"

"I was just coming to that, man—not she."

"It was Hesketh," cries Tom.—"I see it all!"

"Even so," says Macdonald. "And now I suppose you begin to have a little insight."

"Ellen Hesketh's mother!—Good Heavens! she is Catline's child.—O, father, what a mystery has been here!"

"A mystery ca' ye't?—My word, it's been a mystery!"

"And how is it Miss Hesketh has been left all her life with Mr. Keith?"

"Why, just because it was the best I could make of it, Tom.—Keith, and his sister Mrs. Gordon, were living at that time in St. Andrews—Mrs. Hesketh—Mrs. Catline, I should say, was of their religion, and I had introduced the priest to her by way of some comfort, and he had made her acquainted with Mrs. Gordon; and the fact is, that Ellen was born under their roof, and I found that they were attached to the bairn; and the father, he was willing to make a settlement of a few hundred pounds for the aliment, provided I could manage to keep all that had happened snug. I knew—he told me so distinctly—that if the affair were blown in that quarter, it would ruin him in the opinion of his friends, and particularly of the family into which his mother had married—the Daltons of Grypherwast."

"Ha!—I see it, father."

"To be sure you do. If he were blown there, he could have no farther hopes from them; and besides all that, he would lose his Liverpool match, which, I told you, he had already set his heart upon. In brief, Thomas, I may have done wrong, but I judged it was for the best at the time, so I e'en agreed to the plan he had proposed. I settled it that the bairn should be brought up by Keith's sister. She was a widow lady, and had no family of her own; and you know as well as I do, that they have been as kind to her, from that day to this, as they could have been if she had been their ain flesh and blood. In the mean time, Catline marries the Liverpool lady—a great heiress supposed to be, but in that he soon found he had been mistaken. Time goes on—his children grow up—his sister, Miss Dalton, dies—and the estate is left, *not* to him, as you know, but to his daughter."

"Disappointed in all his base views!—How justly punished!"

"Punished His punishment is to begin yet."

"How, father, how? Has he not lost both his wife's fortune and his sister's?—What now remains? He *is* punished—he is poor; and, after what you have told me, can I doubt that he is miserable?"

"Tam Macdonald, you are a sensible lad—Was there ever a man worse used than I have been?"

"Indeed, my dear father, you have quite satisfied me as to Sir Charles Catline's character; but you must forgive me for saying that I am yet to learn in what respect he has injured you. If you are still alluding to the affair of Mr. Frederick Chisney, I must tell you plainly, that had I known as much of Sir Charles a few months ago as I do now, I should scarcely have been persuaded to think even for a moment of connecting myself with his family."

"His family?—His daughter?—What's the objection, boy?"

"Why, how can you ask, father?—A young woman brought up by such a man—How could one expect much from her?"

"O! I take you—'tis the education you were thinking of. Well, after all, Miss Ellen has, I dare say, been far better with honest old Keith."

"Certainly—most certainly so—no comparison, father."

"No comparison in the world, Tom—and look at the result—what a different creature!"

"Ay, indeed," said the Cornet, and he sighed, and avoided the old man's peering eyes.

"A charming young lady, indeed, Tom.—Why, for that matter, she's a perfect beauty—so was her mother before her, to be sure.—What say you, Tammy?"

'Why, what should I say, father? I—I—what can I say? Everybody acknowledges Miss Hesketh's beauty."

"Miss Hesketh!—Say Miss Catline at once, man.—Look at that paper, Tam."

"Good God! his handwriting!"

"Ay, troth is it, Thomas; my word, I took good care that it should not go out of my keeping—look at that too."

"A bond!—his handwriting again!"

"Ay, ay, leave me alone for the handwriting; why, sir, I can prove the thing—I can prove it—ay, and what's more, he knows, the scoundrel knows, that I can prove it."

"To be sure, he does—but what use could it serve? I'm sure, father, you can't think that you would be doing the young lady any favour by throwing her into the hands of such a parent."

"What mean ye, lad?"

"Such a parent as Sir Charles — a bad man, and surely, surely, a bad father. Why, he has neglected her all her days—what good purpose could it answer to force him to acknowledge her now?—I suppose you have no fears as to the bond."

"Perhaps not."

"Nay, if you're not sure of the money, 'tis another matter. In justice to her, you certainly ought to lose no time in having that part of it placed beyond all sort of doubt."

"You may trust me, Tom;" and he thrust the papers into his pocket-book, and that into his bosom, with a most exquisite grin. "But we're neglecting our bottle, Tom; fill a bumper, and I'll give you a toast, and a toast that you'll scarcely find fault with—ay, man, that's filled like a man—and here's to Ellen Catline and her Right—her Right, I say—her Right, Tom Macdonald, and nobody's but hers."

"Miss Catline!"

"Weel, and what for are ye curtailing my toast?—once more, I say, 'tis *Ellen Catline and her Right.*"

"*Ellen Catline and her Right*, be it."

"Be it?—It is—it shall be."

"What shall be, father?"

The old man kept his keen eye upon the Cornet's not very composed countenance for a good many seconds; at last he shook his head, and said, "Tom Macdonald, tis but a poor head thou hast got upon that comely pair of shoulders."

"My dear father——"

"Ye needna be dear fathering me, Tam—od, man, but ye are a slow chield—*you* a Macdonald! Oh, fie! oh, fie!—Oh ye gomeril," he added, in a lower tone, and grinding his teeth as he let out the words—"Did not I once show you a certain testament, the copy of it, I mean? Did not I give it into your own hand? Did not I see you read it? and did I not talk it ower wi' you clause by clause, and line by line, ye —— but pshooh! pshooh! what signifies either reading or hearing wi' some folk?—Did your een just roam

blind ower't, as if it had been a lottery handbill, or a quack's puff, you haveril?"

"Over *what*, father? Upon my word, you are too hard with me."

"Upon my word, you are too slow for the patience of a saint, sir. Why, you silly callant, what are ye dreaming at? Did you not read Miss Dalton's will?"

"I did—and what has that to do with the matter we were speaking of?"

"I'm clean wearied o' you, Tam Macdonald; but come, come, I want to see the paper again at any rate myself—here's the keys of my writing-table, you'll find in D—the third packet that comes to your hand—run, now, and see you bring it down cannily."

Tom had no difficulty in discovering the packet in the well-arranged repositories of the careful scribe. He returned with it immediately, and found his father strutting up and down the room, and rubbing his hands. He took the packet from him instantly, and untied it; and putting on his spectacles, ran his eye rapidly over the pages, until he reached the passage he had been in quest of—he muttered to himself, took his son by the hand, and, laying his forefinger on the spot, said, "There, Tom, there it is, you silly boy—he that runs might read how it stands."

"The name is left out," says Tom; "it certainly is a strange omission—perhaps 'tis the fault of the copier."

"Not a bit of it," cries the grinning conveyancer—"not a bit of it, my hearty—I saw the original, and compared them with my own eyes."

"And does it not occur in any other part of the deed?"

"Gae away, gae away, read it over for yourself—you'll find the Christian name left out in every part—od, man, do you not see how it has happened? the Christian name had been omitted in the draft, and the principal deed had been signed in a hurry, ere there was time to fill it up."

"A strange blunder, surely, in the lawyer."

"An ignorant ramshackle, no question; however, 'tis a good deed, Tom—ye need na doubt it—Sir Charles took the opinion o' counsel as to that matter."

"And Mrs. Chisney is safe, after all?"

"Safe! aha! lad, there will be twa words to that bargain, I promise you—Safe? safe enough, ye may swear—just as safe as she deserves to be."

"I begin to see what you are thinking of, father."

"Begin to see?—we're meikle beholden to you, no question, Tom—begin to see it, i' faith! why, 'tis as clear as daylight, man—we have but to prove the wedding, and the birth—leave me alone for that part o't—and as I am a Christian saul, the braid lands are her ain as sure as if she had been nine times infeft in every square inch o' them—and now, what do you think of all this affair, Tammy Macdonald?"

"Think? why, what should I think? I am sorry for Mrs. Chisney, but of course—of course, I shall be rejoiced to see Miss Ellen have her right."

"I believe ye, Tom," says the old man, very quietly; "I'll believe you on your bare word, my lad, this time."

"The bell rung just then, and a moment after Mr. Keith's voice was heard in the lobby. "Plague on't," quoth Macdonald, "the Priest has fallen in with indifferent claret for once, I believe—I did na look for him these two hours—but, however, Tom, my dear, I fancy all's said that need have been said; you understand me completely—there's to be no hurrying—*festina lente* is to be our motto—we've the haill simmer afore us."

"I hope Sir Charles will not make any foolish opposition," says the Cornet.

"Pooh! pooh! Sir Charles, indeed! he may whistle on his thumb for me, my cock—I have him—I have him—do you mind your hits—but I need not preach *now*, I believe; you colour, callant—weel, weel, be as blate as ye like wi' me, sae ye be bauld elsewhere."

"Father—hear me for a moment, father," says Tom, earnestly.

"Tutti, tatti," quoth Glenstroan, "I have een in my head as well as my neighbours—ye had a pleasant walk this forenoon, Tom?"

"Yes, sir, certainly; we went down to the sea-coast."

"Oo, ay—oo, ay—but eneugh, eneugh, I'm no wanting to hear the particulars, man—She's a sweet lassie, i' my faith, if she had not ae bawbee to rub on anither."

"Miss Catline?"

"Wheesht, wheesht, young man—Miss Hesketh, you mean—keep a watch on your lips now, and take ye care how ye come rapping out with things afore the time—Keith's a keen chield, believe me, and no half sae deaf I sometimes think, as he would have us give him credit for. Be particularly cautious, Tom; in a week or two, maybe, I'll have farther orders—" And with this the scribe drained the single bumper that remained of the magnum; and pressing his finger once or twice significantly upon his lips, moved towards the door of the room. Tom heard him whistle a bar or two of "Tam Glen," as he went up-stairs to the drawing-room, where Mr. Keith had already joined the society of the two ladies.

CHAPTER LII.

TOM'S PERPLEXITY.

THE hurry of surprise (to say nothing of other emotions) with which Tom Macdonald received the intelligence of the preceding chapter, was such, that it was no wonder he had

heard it to an end ere his mind could command itself to weigh, with anything approaching to sober deliberation, the whole bearings of the circumstances under which his newly-acquired knowledge left him. In the drawing-room, to which he was obliged to repair almost immediately, he conducted himself in a style that failed not to excite the attention both of his father and of Ellen, although it is true that they severally attributed what they could not but remark, to very different causes, and not less true, that neither of them was perfectly happy in conjecturing. Ellen not unnaturally conceived that the trying conversation of the morning had shaken Tom's nerves. Indeed, agitated as she had been herself in consequence of it, how could she think otherwise? The old writer, on the other hand, contemplated the absent and abstracted demeanour of his son with occasional crafty glances of triumphant satisfaction. From the close intimacy which he had previously delighted in observing—but, above all, from the tender parting of which he had that very day obtained a glimpse while coming down to dinner—he had not the least doubt that his son and Ellen were lovers; and he now watched their eyes, which, to be sure, did not meet without betraying a little soft confusion, with a proud sense of self-congratulation. Yes! he *had* at last taken the right way—forcing young people upon each other was, after all, a folly; he *had* profited by his experience; this quieter and less obtrusive art *had* done its work; Tom had been flattered with the thought of acting independently, and now the silken fetters were rivetted beyond all possibility of bursting. Had he proclaimed even this angel an heiress, and commanded his son to woo her, such was the perversity of a young spirit, he might have commanded in vain. How exquisite was the balm of these dreams?—How bland the simper which they communicated to his lips! As for Tom's being more silent and awkward this evening than he had usually been in the presence of his supposed inamorata, this the old gentleman set down to nothing but the tumult of joy into which, he doubted *not*, the Cornet had been thrown by the discovery that in place of wooing a poor fair one, his union with whom would probably be opposed by his parent, he had been all the while sacrificing not on the altar of love only, but also on that of ambition, and, in fact, following with unconscious fidelity and perseverance the very path which had been chalked out for him by the prudent and sagacious affection of the author of his being.

In reality, the perplexity of the poor young gentleman's meditations was such, that it might well have baffled the most skilful analyser of countenances, to read aright the manifold workings that had stamped their blended and interwoven traces upon his. It was not until the party had broken up, and he had mused over the whole affair for more hours than one in his own chamber, that he himself could be said to understand thoroughly what, in the first tumult of excitation, had merely pressed upon him certain vague and scarcely distinguishable emotions, of the pleasurable and the painful.

And these emotions, calmed as his reflections had come to be, were still mingled together inextricably in his bosom. The disappointment of his heart had not hardened it. Ellen had refused him her love, but this was not hers to give. It had been bestowed ere she knew him, and he could not but say to himself that it had been bestowed upon one every way worthy of the inestimable boon. Some indefinable mixture of weakness and soreness there might be, but, on the whole, his disappointment had been received at first with humility, and he could now think of it with uncomplaining seriousness. The manner in which she had treated him—the open, frank, candid, womanly gentleness with which she had at once told him *her* secret—this had moved his gratitude. Had it not been so, he must have been unworthy of the name of manhood. Whatever taint of frailty might still hover near him, he was resolved to banish it; and he struggled against it, and his better thoughts were prevailing—had prevailed.

To know that Ellen, who conceived herself to be a poor, deserted, and forlorn creature, was, in reality, at this very moment entitled to the possession of an honourable name, and of a splendid fortune, which would at once enable her to be happy with the man she loved, and from whom she had supposed herself to be all but hopelessly separated—To know all this, and not to rejoice that such was the real state of affairs, would have augured a mind not only capable of evil, but altogether incapable of good. He rejoiced—he pleased himself—in the midst of the less genial thoughts that sometimes crossed the train of his reflection he could not but please himself—with picturing the near termination of all her misfortunes. Nay, he felt that he owed Ellen much—and he felt, that to be of use in hastening and facilitating in any way this consummation, would afford to him a truer and more lasting satisfaction than anything else he could at the moment fancy himself engaged in. In a word, his spirit tossed upon itself until all the clinging dross of earthly frailty was winnowed away. And, long ere sleep came near his pillow, he had vowed to himself, that until her happiness was accomplished, he should be hers—and hers alone—the humble unhoping servant—the friend—the brother. The tender passion that had seen its flower withered, still kept its root within his breast; and a certain soothing charm was breathed from it, to heighten the resolution, and adorn the devotion, of a young and manly bosom.

And need there was for both. Macdonald

was a son, and, strong as his other feelings were on this occasion, how could his filial ones be weak? At first, he had been so much taken by surprise, that he had been altogether incapable of scrutinising the motives of other breasts, perplexed and agitated as he was with the conflicting passions of his own. But now he was alone, and, in so far at least, he had recovered the possession and command of himself; and how could he avoid the painful necessity of examining—if examining it need be called—the whole conduct of his father throughout the transactions, from which their old veil of mystery had been so suddenly and unexpectedly removed? And what, alas! could be the result of that examination? His father had known the history of Ellen from its beginning; he had also known, for several months past, all that his son had never suspected of the defects of the will under which Miss Barbara Catline had succeeded to the estates of her aunt, Miss Dalton. He had known this, and yet it was he that had suggested and urged that suit, which, if indeed there could have at any time been the least doubt of that, subsequent incidents had so clearly proved to have been devised and prompted merely from views of worldly ambition and aggrandisement. And now, what trace was there of any more generous, or rather of any more just sentiments, having succeeded to these?—Alas! none.—He was willing to establish Ellen in her right—but why? only because he believed that by doing so he should be gaining, through another channel, the same filthy lucre which, through any channel, no matter how sinful, he had been willing to acquire.

The Cornet had never permitted himself to sit as a judge upon his father. Many parts of his behaviour had indeed conspired, in spite of himself, to force upon him the conviction that he was not a man of the highest vein of honourable feeling. This defect, however, he had been ever willing to attribute to nothing but the character of those transactions and affairs into which his course of life had of necessity thrown him—the meannesses with which his early poverty had put him in contact, and with which his protracted struggle to get the better of that poverty might have made it almost impossible for him not to become familiar. But here—what sophistry even of filial partiality—what reluctance even of wounded Nature herself, could blind the young man to the deep and desperate wickedness of which his parent had been guilty? What thoughts could equal in bitterness those which now forced themselves into the possession of this candid bosom? Even conscious guilt itself could scarcely have been followed by more perfect humiliation. His cheek, in his midnight privacy, glowed with burning blushes. Wrath, stern and gloomy wrath—high indignation, that feared to deem itself scorn—sorrow, miserable sorrow—sorrow for his father—double, treble sorrow for his mother—such were some of the tumultuous and tormenting emotions that chased each other over a mind that had before been abundantly lacerated; and from them it will easily be imagined what were some of the temptations against which there behoved to be no slender struggle, before the high sense of right and justice could achieve a total victory, even aided as this was by all the melancholy chivalry of a generous and disinterested attachment. The struggle, however, had been endured, and the victory had been gained.

It was the first time that this young man had found himself called upon to grapple with anything like the real difficulties of life and action. He saw that a crisis had come—that events were gathering—and he felt that it was impossible he should be a mere spectator. And what should he do?—how should he begin?—whom should he lean to?—whom could he lean to or consult?—Might it not be possible to melt his father by one strong, sincere appeal?—might it not be possible to persuade him at once to drop all his own selfish schemes, and serve Ellen, merely for her sake, and for the sake of justice?—But what if pride, and the wrath of contradiction, and the bitterness of baffled artifice, should be sufficient to set that strong mind altogether upon the defensive—to make him turn round with a withering sneer, and destroy, in the very instant of irritation, the only proofs of that marriage, which unproved, the whole web must for ever remain unentangled? He knew the hot and the vindictive temper of the man—he knew enough of it at least to make him tremble while he pondered over these possibilities. But Sir Charles Catline might at once remove that, and every other difficulty, by avowing his marriage with Ellen's mother. He, too, had been disappointed, and his injuries had come to him from his own flesh and blood. What sort of reconciliation had taken place, or if any had taken place, the Cornet knew not; but the more he thought of all the circumstances—above all, of Frederick Chisney's character and disposition, the more did he feel the conviction, that no sincere friendship would ever be cemented between Catline poor, and Chisney rich. In the bitterness of his outraged affections, might not Sir Charles be glad to turn from Barbara and her lord to this poor desolate creature, the pledge of the first love of his youth?—might not his weaned heart be at this very moment thirsting after the luxury of reconciling himself to her that had never injured him?

The Cornet had heard nothing of Sir Charles for several weeks past. The truth is, that the Baronet, after remaining for a little while at Portobello, in expectation of hearing from Mr. and Mrs. Chisney, and also in anxiety to have an interview with Mr. Macdonald, had been at last convinced, that none

of these parties were at all desirous of holding any immediate communication with him.—Of Barbara and her husband he could not recover the smallest trace. Macdonald, he was told by his clerks in Edinburgh, was likely to remain for some time longer in the South. Lady Catline, meantime, had been left alone in London; and he found himself, however reluctantly, under the necessity of joining her there, both for the purpose of escorting her down into Lancashire, and for that of consulting certain persons with whom he had of late years had but too many dealings, as to the arrangement of his pecuniary affairs, which had been thrown into the greatest confusion in consequence of the events that had recently taken place in his family. Sir Charles had left Scotland the very day before Macdonald and his fellow-travellers reached Berwick; and he only avoided meeting them by the accident of his having preferred going by the Carlisle road.

But to return to Thomas Macdonald—the result of all his meditations was, that the best and wisest course he could pursue, would be to keep quiet for a little while, until he should have some opportunity of gradually opening his mind to his father—as well as, in case that should fail, some means of learning where Sir Charles Catline was, that he might make a direct application to him, should it be necessary in the *dernier ressort*. The young man was willing, moreover, to indulge a slight hope that his father might, in some moment of unguardedness, reveal the whole story either to Mr. Keith or to Ellen herself, and thus spare him altogether the most painful part of the duty for which he had been endeavouring to nerve himself. Or perhaps he might bestow some part of his confidence on Mrs. Macdonald—and, in that case, Thomas could not doubt that his father would adopt the right course, without having it suggested by him—or, at the least, that his own suggestions would receive the strongest and most irresistible aid from the generous and upright mind of his mother. He resolved, therefore, at whatever expense of pain to himself, to bear with everything for a week or two, until events should be more ripe; and, in the mean time, to watch, with unceasing diligence, for some opening either into his father's heart, or into that of Sir Charles Catline.

Thomas was very willing to defer for at least a few hours his next meeting with his father—so he rose early, left a note for his mother, to say that he was engaged abroad to breakfast, and was out of the house long before any part of the family were astir. He walked by himself towards the sea-coast—the very same way he had gone the day before in company with Ellen; and after pacing for an hour or two upon the sands, proceeded towards Newhaven, where he ordered breakfast in a room looking out upon the sea.

The waiter brought him a newspaper along with his coffee; and casting his eye lazily enough over the columns, he was suddenly arrested by a paragraph which announced certain Captains as having been sworn into the command of different outward-bound ships at the India-House. He started, as the thought flashed upon him, that Reginald Dalton might be to sail in one of these vessels—nay, that he might have sailed already.

Should he defer a single post, that delay might be quite enough—he must write to him—he must arrest his voyage—at whatever hazard, he must do this—if it were not done, how should he forgive himself? But how?—in what terms?—how to produce the effect, without prematurely disclosing the secret of his father?—or, at the least, without betraying the secret which Ellen Hesketh had so generously revealed to himself?

But the thing must be done—and Tom Macdonald had no difficulty in choosing his alternative. He wrote immediately to Dalton, and his letter was in the post-office within an hour after it was written. He told him, in as few words as possible, that he found himself under the necessity of representing to him, that certain circumstances had occurred which would render his going to India, at this moment, a most serious evil both to himself and to Miss Hesketh. "The use I make of that name," said he, "and every other particular, shall be explained to you at the proper time—and, I earnestly hope, in the course of a very few weeks. In the mean time, rest assured that the step I have taken has been prompted by nothing but a sense of absolute necessity, and that I feel convinced, that although Miss Hesketh does not know of it now, she would not have forgiven me afterwards had I neglected it. I hope, therefore, you will remain in London, at whatever risk or inconvenience, until you hear farther from me; and, in the mean time, believe me your sincere friend," &c. &c. &c.

CHAPTER LIII.

A HASTY DEPARTURE.

It has already been mentioned under what circumstances Sir Charles Catline left the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, very shortly before the two Macdonalds returned to that city in company with Mr. Keith and his *protégée*. This unfortunate man, between the various disappointments which he had recently met with in his own family, and the pressure of pecuniary claims, which were every day becoming more and more intolerable, and from which, after what had happened, he could see but little chance of finding any way to relieve himself, was reduced to a state of most miserable anxiety and despondence, and began his journey to London,

rather from a vague feeling that it was necessary he should do something, than with anything like a determined plan, or even with any general notion as to what he should do.

In passing through Lancashire, he was informed that his daughter and her husband had been at Grypherwast Hall for a single night, in the course of the preceding week, and had proceeded southwards, as it was supposed in the neighbourhood, for London. Among other letters to Barbara, he had, while at Portobello, addressed one to Grypherwast; so that one at least, he could have no doubt, had fallen into her hands; and the certainty that she had received one of his appeals, and yet vouchsafed no sort of answer, added, of course, new bitterness to the reflections with which he had already been sufficiently harassed. Very shame prevented him from stooping to repair to Grypherwast, for the purpose of making personal inquiries as to the ulterior motions of the disdainful fugitives—and he went on towards the capital, in a mood which, long ere he had reached it, had settled down from the keen irritation of anger, into the deliberate coldness of hatred.

And revenge, a terrible revenge, *was* in his power—he knew that, and moments were not wanting, when it seemed to him as if it would be a luxury to buy that revenge, even at that expense, or rather at that destruction of his own character, which he could not conceal from himself the acquisition must necessarily involve. Such moments there were. Sometimes, as the mail-coach was whirling him rapidly along in the dark, he would lean back in his seat, and grind his teeth in a savage, and even a haughty joy, picturing to himself the cloud of deadly retribution in which, by one word, he could wrap those that had rebelled and trampled upon himself—and disdaining the sacrifices by which this consummation must be purchased. But the stern wrath, under which such visions were invested with the semblance of luxury, was not lessened, when visions of a very different sort succeeded them. "I have still," he said to himself, "one hope—one outlet—I *shall* see this Chisney—I *shall* tell him the truth, and the whole truth—I shall force him to see on what a precipice he stands, and how easily the least motion of mine can impel him headlong from the brink of all his fancied triumph—I *shall* force him to see this—and I *shall* make my own terms."

But what if Ralph Macdonald should have already forestalled him here?—Well he knew the cunning and unscrupulous nature of that old associate. He, too, had sustained a grievous disappointment; and, in spite of every explanation that had been, or could be, given, Sir Charles felt that Macdonald *must* remain convinced, that his disappointment was entirely owing to that nervous reluctance (no matter how natural, no matter how excusable it might have been) with which he — Catline — had shrunk from putting his daughter, instantly upon her aunt's death, in possession of the secret history, which placed both her father's character and her own fortunes at Macdonald's mercy. And Macdonald, too, had avoided him in the day of his calamity — who could tell, whether *he* might not have found access ere now to Chisney, and given up, for some weighty advantage to himself, the only legal evidence by which the marriage at St. Andrews could now, at so great a distance of time, and under circumstances apparently of so great suspicion, be fairly and completely established? If this should be the case—if Chisney had already purchased Macdonald's secrecy, with what double scorn would he not now turn upon him—with what real scorn would not his knowledge of all that dark history entitle even *him* to receive his applications? The more he thought of all these different views of the matter, the more did his mind become balanced between hope that was scarcely less than fear, and fear that was nothing less than despair. It was under the influence of such conflicting and tormenting doubts and anticipations, that Sir Charles once more entered London.

And in London he found no comfort. His wife, a silly woman, vain to excess in prosperity, peevish to excess in adversity—accustomed in either fortune to be coldly and unkindly treated by her husband—received him with sour looks and endless questions, and teased with idle reproaches one that was overwhelmed already with the burden of just and unpartaken troubles. He could hear nothing from her of Barbara and her lord—and none of his acquaintance possessed, or at least avowed, more knowledge of them. Meantime he was surrounded by creditors, who had advanced money to him from year to year upon the strength of his expectations from his sister, and who had spared him during the weeks or months immediately following her death, only because they were led to believe, that his daughter could not refuse eventuallly to discharge all his encumbrances. These *post-obit* gentry were becoming every day more clamorous—and the poor man, once in London, saw clearly, that, however unhappy his situation was there, he could not leave it, without at once bringing the whole affair to a crisis. In this total discomfort—thus tottering upon the brink of ruin—thus teased from without, and tormented from within, he lingered on from day to day, and from week to week, writing letters to Macdonald and receiving no answers—reiterating advertisements, addressed to eyes that he scarcely expected would deign to understand them—flattering Jews—scolding his wife—and cursing himself.—Guilt and need preyed in stern alliance upon him—and yet, in spite of all these stimulants, his state

of mind was, on the whole, one of languor, listlessness, and utter weariness of heart.

Frederick Chisney and his lady, meanwhile, had been keeping themselves so long out of the reach of their acquaintances, from an odd mixture of motive, or, perhaps the better phrase might be, of whim. Barbara had eloped in the way we have seen, because she was resolved to marry Frederick, and would not undergo the fatigue of fighting with her father's avowed and earnest predilection for the alliance of the Macdonald family. She had, however, such a high sense of her own importance, that her father's pursuing her flight, from stage to stage, and even from kingdom to kingdom, had appeared to her in the light of a most unwarrantable and intolerable interference with the will and pleasure of the heiress of Grypherwast. His letters, and, above all, his pertinacity in stuffing the newspapers with advertisements to "A young Gentleman and Lady"—"Two fugitives, who have only to return, in order to be welcomed by their best friends"—"F. and B.," &c. &c., had been considered as so many aggravations of the original insult by Barbara—and Frederick, who was not without some feelings that rendered him sufficiently willing to put off the meeting with his own brother and sister (I allude to what he knew they would think of his interfering with the claims, however imaginary, of Reginald Dalton), very easily gave in to her proposal—which was neither more nor less, than that they should continue to jaunt about from place to place for a few weeks, and so allow all their friends time to cool. In pursuance of this scheme, the gay couple had, after their short visit to their Lancashire domain, once more assumed a feigned name (a different one, too, from what they had been pleased to carry with them into Scotland), and struck through Cheshire into Wales. They had amused themselves among the romantic scenery of that country, passing a few days occasionally at any place that happened particularly to hit their fancy. They had traversed the principality in almost the whole of its extent;—and were at last coming back slowly to London, by the way of Bristol and Bath, just about the time when Sir Charles Catline's affairs had approached such a degree of perplexity, that, in all probability, a week more must see him in prison, or at least safe from prison, only by having taken up his abode within the rules.

They stopped a day at Oxford—the young lady was anxious to see the wonders of the place, and perhaps her lord was not sorry to have the opportunity of showing off his pretty heiress and his handsome equipage to his old associates of the Cap and Gown. However that might be, they spent a very gay day there—and proceeded from thence to London, by the way of Windsor, without giving themselves the trouble of resuming their incognito. On reaching town, they drove to one of the most fashionable hotels in the parish of St. James's—and immediately sent annunciations of their arrival, conceived with as much of the air of *nonchalance* as they could muster, both to the Squire of Thorwold, and to the residence of the Catlines. Mr. and Mrs. Chisney had, ere this time, returned to Lancashire—but the other note was forthwith answered by the personal appearance of Sir Charles Catline.

The haggard aspect, which his cares and vexations had given the Baronet, gave place to a smile of elaborate blandness, as he walked up to his daughter, who, with an air of real languor and affected modesty, rose to receive his embrace. Chisney, on his part, covered whatever perturbation he might feel under the veil of a calm and even stately politeness—and nothing passed during the first half-hour of the interview but a succession of very pretty speeches, in which the young people apologised for everything, but what they knew really required apology—and the elder gentleman rallied them on every matter, but that which, in reality, had formed from the beginning, and still formed, the main spring of his most paternal uneasiness.—By and by, Lady Catline also appeared.—Not happening to be at home when her daughter's note arrived, Sir Charles had forwarded an intimation of what had happened to the place where her ladyship was visiting; and now she entered the room, where our trio were seated, with a countenance of lofty indifference, and received the submission of her children in a style of hauteur, which formed a striking contrast to the demeanour which her craftier lord had found it convenient to assume. Sir Charles foresaw, that she and Barbara, who had never understood each other at any time, would infallibly have some bitter words now. He whispered to Mr. Frederick that perhaps it might be well to leave the ladies together for a short time—and, the young gentleman assenting, they both quitted the room immediately.

Sir Charles, the moment he found himself alone with Frederick, threw an air of deep gravity into his face, and said, "Mr. Chisney, you must not be deceived by what I have been saying and doing in Barbara's presence. However you might despise the hints I gave you in my letters, be assured that I *have* business of the utmost importance to communicate to you."

"Well, sir," says Chisney, "I am all ear—let me hear it."

"Mr. Chisney, you suppose this business is of importance only to me—you are mistaken—it affects yourself—it affects the whole fortune of your wife."

"My wife's fortune, Sir Charles!—and how, pray?"

Sir Charles made no answer, but drew his son-in-law into another parlour—bolted the door, seated himself by a table, took a roll

of papers from his pocket, and spread a copy of the Grypherwast will upon the board before him. "Here, sir," said he, "is the deed, in virtue of which Barbara is an heiress—look over it, Mr. Chisney—read it carefully."

"I have read it several times already," said Frederick—"'tis a very well-drawn deed."

"And not worth one farthing, sir."

"Sir?"

"Yes, sir—not worth one single sous."

"Ha! ha! Sir Charles—you jest with me."

"Not at all, Mr. Chisney—let us understand each other—this will, sir, is not worth one single farthing, *unless I choose*."

"Ha!—upon my word, that's odd enough—unless *you* choose, Sir Charles Catline?"

"Unless *I* choose, Mr. Frederick Chisney."

"Pooh! pooh!—explain—explain."

"Mr. Chisney, let us understand each other. I believe I do understand you pretty well—it is time you should understand a little of me. Do you observe, that Barbara's name is omitted here?"

"Ay to be sure I do—but if that's all, Sir Charles, I can tell you I consulted three of the first lawyers in England two months ago, and they all agreed the omission was of no sort of importance—Is that the mare's nest then?"

"Sir, you will find, that I am not quite such a fool as you seem, in your exceeding politeness, to have done me the honour of supposing."

"A fool, sir!—Upon my word, you do me great injustice, Sir Charles Catline."

"No matter, Mr. Chisney—but to the point, sir. Have I not been beautifully treated?—have you not deceived me, sir?—have you not stolen my daughter?—and, to crown all, have you not insulted me, grossly insulted me, in every item of your behaviour since?"

"Sir Charles Catline, once for all, you may depend upon it, that this style will not answer with me. Let me tell you, sir, that I conceive my alliance is by no means derogatory to all the blood of all the Catlines. Your daughter was independent of you when she chose to become my wife; and now that she is so, it forms no part of my intentions to suffer either her or myself to be bored with this antediluvian sort of nonsense. Have done at once, Sir Charles. I assure you I had hoped we were to have none of this."

"Ah! sir, you will find that you have by no means had the last of it. Know, sir, in one word—know the truth—it rests with me, by one word, to make Barbara heiress of nothing but her smock."

"It rests with you, sir?—Indeed?—Well, and pray, what may be this *one* word?—This *vox et præterea nihil?*"

"Hear the *vox et præterea nihil*, then, Mr. Frederick Chisney;" and with this he leaned across the table, so as to bring his lips within a few inches of Chisney's face, and said, in a very low, but very distinct whisper, being the while as pale as if he had been uttering a midnight incantation, "Lady Catline was not my first wife."

"Ha! impossible!" And Frederick started from his chair.

"Possible!—True!" proceeded the Baronet, neither moving from his place nor raising his voice—"most possible, Mr. Chisney, and most true—and this is not all, young man—Lady Catline's family are not my first family."

"Ha!"—

"Ay, ha! sir—nor is Mrs. Frederick Chisney *the eldest daughter of Sir Charles Catline*."

Frederick sunk into his chair again, and said, in a whisper as low as Sir Charles's, "Sir, are you playing with me?"

"No, sir," answered the Baronet, quite coolly, "there is no play here, Mr. Chisney—*I have* another and an elder daughter than Barbara."

"And I am ruined?"

"Yes, sir, and you are ruined—*if* I speak one word."

There was a pause of some minutes, during which they continued eyeing each other stedfastly. Chisney broke the silence—"Are you alone, sir, in possession of this secret?"

"I would to God I were, sir."

"You are not?"

"No, sir, I am not—there is *one* more."

"And but one?"

"One—just one."

"Who?—Where is he?—What can be done?"

"Much, *if* I choose."

"Choose, sir?—Good God! Do you hesitate?—What can buy his secrecy?"

"*His* secrecy, sir?—And what of *mine?*"

"Yours? O, Sir Charles, I cannot believe that you are in earnest. Could you think, could you dream of it?"

"Dream of what, sir?—Dream of doing justice to my own child?"

"And Barbara!"—

"Ay, sir—And what has Barbara merited at my hands?—And what have you merited, Mr. Frederick Chisney?"

"Sir Charles—Sir Charles—name your terms—say what you please—do with us as you will."

"Come, Mr. Chisney," said the Baronet, throwing himself back in his chair, and folding his arms on his breast,—"Come, sir, you now begin to speak something like sense; but be in no hurry—if we once fairly understand each other, there need be no haste about the particulars. In the mean time, you will sign an obligation, taking upon you some debts that are distressing me here, in London; and when that is done, why, I think, the best thing we can do is to go together in

quest of the third person, whose mouth we must seal."

"Sir, I will sign anything you please—I am in your hands—you know I am."

"Ah! sir, but we are both in the hands of another. Come, sir, there's no need for mystery—you know the man I mean—you know old Macdonald."

"Ha! Macdonald?"

"Ralph Macdonald—the same."

"I understand the thing now, sir—his son was——"

"Don't speak about his son now, sir—that, you know, is all over—we must see what terms we can make."

"Instantly—Oh! yes, sir, instantly."

"Wait a little, my friend. I have not seen him since the day you left London; nor have I been able to hear from him, although I have written a dozen times."

"And where is he?"

"I don't know—he was not in Scotland, nor expected to be soon there, when I left Edinburgh."

"That's weeks ago—he is there now—I know he is."

"How do you know anything of it, sir?"

"As I came through Oxford, a few days ago, I heard of his having been there, and having set off from thence for Scotland about a month ago, or more."

"Are you quite sure of that?—how?"

"Why I heard of it rather accidentally, in consequence of making some little inquiries about some persons of my acquaintance, who, I found, had set off for the North along with him and his son."

"Who, I pray?—who?"

"An old Catholic Priest, one Keith—and his niece, a Miss Hesketh."

"And they set off for Scotland with Macdonald?"

"Yes—Good God! what's this?—Do you know them, sir?"

"Sir, you are ruined—I am ruined—we are ruined irretrievably!"

"Sir Charles!"

"That young lady, sir, was my daughter," and he rose and stamped upon the ground, and grinded his teeth in curses. "We are undone, sir!—outwitted—baffled—baffled like children—Macdonald has been too much for me! Sir, you see what is the end of all your art."

"Miss Hesketh your daughter!—Then, sir, we are indeed undone."

"I should not be surprised," says Catline, "if she were already married to that stripling—Cursed, rash, false old scoundrel!—she is his son's wife at this moment!"

There was another pause longer than the preceding—both of them all the while pacing the room rapidly, and crossing each other every other moment, without exchanging even a glance. At last Sir Charles stamped again upon the floor, and said, "Chisney, we are fools—why do we stand here dallying with time, when already it may be too late?—Come, sir, we must not trifle now—there is but one chance remaining—if we are to lose it, let us not have ourselves to blame more than is necessary. What o'clock is it, sir? Let us leave London this instant."

"For Edinburgh?"

"Ay, certainly, sir. Do you go and tell the ladies any story you please, and I shall order horses this moment to your carriage."

"Must we both go, sir?"

"Pshaw! are you mad? Do you dote, young man? Do you take Macdonald for a numbskull? Faith, we have a pretty title to do so!—Come, sir, you can do nothing without me, and I can do nothing without you."

"Well, sir, I am ready, I shall do your bidding.—But stop, there is one ray of hope still, sir—perhaps she will not have young Macdonald. I more than suspect that she has been for a long while in love with Mr. Dalton."

"Reginald Dalton?"

"The same, sir—he has fought for her once. I know not how far they may have carried it.—Upon my life, I believe she will not think of the young Scotsman."

Sir Charles repeated the word, "Dalton," twice or thrice over to himself, and began pacing across the room again with a heavier and slower step than before. He struck with the palm of his hand upon his forehead, and muttering to himself, rung the bell. He ordered the horses, and motioned to Chisney to leave the apartment, and acquit himself of his commission.

Chisney made up a hasty story about business, which made it absolutely necessary for him and Sir Charles to set off immediately for Grypherwast. Barbara stared and frowned. Lady Catline fanned herself in indignation—there was a short scene of wondering, reproaching, questioning, and exclaiming. It ended, however, in Barbara's being removed to her mother's lodgings, and the two gentlemen were in Huntingdonshire by daybreak the next morning.

CHAPTER LIV.

AN UNSUSPECTED DOCUMENT.

THE Baronet and his son-in-law, having performed the journey as rapidly as either of them had traversed the same road in flight or pursuit some time before, reached Edinburgh early in the morning of the third day. Wearied and heated as Sir Charles was, he would have repaired instantly to Macdonald's house, had it been a few hours later; but, as it was, he was fain to get into bed, and endeavour to profit by the interval which he could not abridge, in collecting a little of strength and

of coolness for a day, in the course of which he well knew he should have abundant occasion for more of both than he was likely to muster.

Sleep he could not—indeed he scarcely attempted to court sleep—but he rose refreshed in some measure, notwithstanding, and having performed his toilet, was in Queen Street by the time when he supposed Macdonald would be done with his breakfast, and at liberty to see him. The servant, however, told him that his master was from home ; and being questioned more particularly, informed him that the whole family had set off about half an hour before, for Rosslynn, where they were to spend the greater part of the day. Sir Charles asked, if they were to be at home to dinner, and was answered in the affirmative. He asked if any company were along with the family. The servant endeavoured to conceal a smile that rose to his lips as he answered, that there was nobody but a Mr. Keith and a Miss Hesketh, who had been living under the roof for some weeks past. Sir Charles had expected this answer, yet he could not hear it without a palpitating bosom. He turned away abruptly—the servant asked for his card—he fumbled in his pocket, and stammered out that he had none about him—that it was of no consequence—that he would call again in the evening. The door was shut—the moment after, he rung the bell again, and said that he wished to leave a note for Mr. Macdonald. The man showed him into the library, and remained by him until he had written and sealed a brief announcement of his arrival, and an earnest request for an hour's conversation as soon as possible. Having left this upon the table, Sir Charles quitted the house, and was joined, ere he had walked many paces, by Chisney, who had been hovering at no great distance. The two gentlemen walked back to their hotel, and shut themselves up there the whole of the morning. It was one of the brightest and loveliest summer days that ever had been seen—they sat together silent for the most part — counting the minutes and the hours, inly cursing the clear heaven and the soft air which had produced the delay — watching, with impatient dread, the approach of the moment when certainty must take the place of fear.

Sir Charles waited until sunset, and still there came no message from Queen Street. He then could endure it no longer—he bade Chisney, on no account, stir from where he was. "They must be come back," said he, "and Macdonald wishes to put off our meeting till to-morrow. I am determined that to-night I will see him ; if he be not arrived now, I will walk within sight of his house until he come. I will force myself into his presence, and send for you to join us the moment it is possible for me to do so."

Meanwhile, Macdonald had been for several hours returned from his excursion. During the hours they had spent among that delightful scenery, he had seen, with a satisfaction which he could with difficulty prevent himself from expressing in open words, symptoms of a mutual intelligence in the looks and demeanour of his son and Ellen, which, to say truth, a very skilful observer might have been pardoned for interpreting somewhat wide of the mark. He had no more doubt of their tenderness than of his own existence. He was the happiest of men, and the proudest ; and nothing but the presence of his wife, whose innate purity of perception he felt the necessity of taking leisurely methods of beguiling, could have prevented him from making Keith acquainted with the whole of the matters that had so long occupied his meditations, in the course of their walk. That obstacle could not be so easily surmounted, and he returned to Edinburgh with his heart as loaded as it was when he left it in the morning, but, notwithstanding, in a flow of spirits—quite overjoyed with himself and his management—and indulging in the most delicious dreams about the approaching triumph of all his schemes. It was in this state of things that he received Sir Charles's note—a most unwelcome interruption it was, and yet he could not but congratulate himself on having escaped meeting the Baronet entirely unprepared. He was very absent during dinner, and, on pretence of business, contrived to be left alone immediately afterwards. Indeed, Mr. Keith had gone up-stairs to refresh himself with a short nap, so that he had only Tom and the two ladies to get rid of.

He was casting the affair about in his mind, and preparing himself with such arguments, or rather such words, as he thought might be most likely to soften the harshness of an interview, which, in one point of view, he dreaded almost as much as the Baronet himself. He was pacing up and down the room, every now and then stopping to imbibe new courage as he passed the table on which the decanters still remained. He had gradually worked himself up to a very reasonable mood of firmness, when the bell rung, and Sir Charles was ushered abruptly into his presence.

The twilight was on the wane—the room was dark—yet each could see the flashing of the other's eye. Macdonald's cheek was burning red—but no wine had aided the flow of Sir Charles Catline's blood. His brow was haggard—his cheek deadly pale. He stopped the moment he had passed the threshold, and Macdonald stopped in his walk too. They eyed each other in silence for a moment. "Sir Charles Catline, let us be seated," said Macdonald—"we shall have much to say to each other."

"We have, Mr. Macdonald. We shall be safe from intrusion ?"

"Certainly we shall.—But why do you ask ?"

"No matter—'tis dark, sir—order lights, if you please."

"Lights, say you?—Well, be it so, sir—you shall have your own way." And with this he rung, and desired the servant to bring candles, and a glass for Sir Charles.

"Mr. Macdonald, we are not here to drink wine. Upon my word, I think we have other business."

"True, Sir Charles—but they may do very well together for a' that. Here's to your good health, sir. I drink it honestly, whatever you may please to think.—Ha! well then, if that way won't do, let me hear at once what you have got to say, sir?"

"Macdonald!—but why should I waste words—I know all that you have been doing, sir—I know what you have had the cruel boldness to plan—I know what you mean to complete and consummate—I confess, that you have outgone all that I had even dared to fear."

"Sir Charles Catline, let us understand each other. You, sir, are well entitled, are you not, to hold this language to me?—You, sir,—yes, you, you, the most deliberate, cold, unfeeling, unnatural——"

"A truce—a truce to your moralities, sir—*our* moralities!—Why, sir, we *do* understand each other—I at least understand you. Have you considered what is to be the consequence of this exposure to yourself?—I know that is the only thing you will listen to.—Give me your answer."

"I will—I will. My good friend——"

"Friend! Macdonald?"

"Ay, friend, Catline!—But be that as you will. Well, sir, I have considered everything. I have been miserably abused by you—I will not say by your deliberate treachery, but at least by your silly contemptible shuffling. I have been so, sir;—and you have been abused—that is the very best view I can take of the matter—by your daughter. She has outwitted you first and last—she has married a scoundrel—you are a beggar, and you have nothing but yourself, and this child of yours, to thank for it. And yet I—I am to lie by, and see your daughter, your rightful eldest daughter, cheated, robbed, sir—and for whom?—not for *you*."

"You don't know what you are saying, sir—you are doing injustice to Chisney. He acted ill, it is true; but he now is disposed—nay, anxious and eager—to make amends to me—and to you, sir. He is here—he is in Edinburgh—he came hither with me from London, on purpose to let you hear from his own lips what he is willing to do for both of us."

"What *he* is willing?—De'il mean him, say I—ha! ha!"

"You may laugh, sir, if you will—but do you hold your character as nothing?—Are you so blind, that you can't see what is to be the issue of all this, even if you do follow your own way, and with more complete success than you may perhaps have in the end if you do so——"

"What, sir!—Do you take me for a ninny? Do you not know what I can do? Do you dream that I have been leaning on chances?—Sir, I have evidence in this house that will cover you with utter confusion in one moment, if you do but dare to make it necessary for me to appeal to it. Sir, I have your letter to your wife—ay, and your bond to myself, sir. Sir, you are entirely at my mercy. Take my word for it, your best way, your only way, is to confess the truth at once, and if you do so, you may perhaps find that all daughters are not unnatural, and that all sons-in-law are not Chisneys."

"Mr. Macdonald, your own character will go—you may be as rich as you will, but you will be a ruined man."

"Me a ruined man?—and for why, good sir? Because I trusted too much and too long to one that I knew had had his errors, but that I hoped was sound at heart in the main—because I watched over his disowned daughter, and procured her the education of a lady—because, when I found that she had rights, and that no consideration of nature or justice was to make her father give her her rights, I did at last confess to myself, that I had been sadly mistaken and egregiously duped all along as to *him*, and did step forwards to put *her* in possession of what nothing but villainy had been holding back from her?"

"Sir, you *may* speak in this way—but indeed it will not do with me—and what is more, far more to the purpose, it will be very far from doing with the world. Sir, there is not a man who knows anything of you but will penetrate your mask—and—but I trifle as well as yourself, sir—I know that you mean to marry her to your son—I know that but for that you would as soon have thought of cutting off your hand. I understand you too well, Mr. Macdonald—have done, have done, and hear, once for all, the only thing that will move you."

"I listen," quoth Glenstroan, filling his glass, and slowly lifting it to his lips.

"Sir, there is something in my power, after all."

"Is there indeed?—Let's hear what it is, Sir Charles."

"You smile, Mr. Macdonald. Upon my word, sir, you treat me rather more cavalierly than is quite decent. Have a care, sir—have a care, I say—you know not what you are trifling with."

"Trifling, Sir Charles?—Who is trifling but yourself?—Out with your word of might and main, man—out with it at once, and let's have done."

"Mr. Macdonald, you *can* put this girl in the place of Barbara—I believe you can."

"I know I can—*know* is the word, Sir Charles."

"Well, sir, let *know* be the word. I know that when you have put her in Barbara's place,

I can make that place not worth the holding. Do you take me now?"

"Not at all—not at all," cries he, carelessly crossing his legs—"I'm quite in the dark—you speak in parables."

"And what would you speak in, sir, if the will itself were not worth one straw?—heh, sir, what would you say then?"

"I would say it was a confounded pity. But you forget that I've seen the will myself—that I have a copy of it here in this house—that both you and I have ta'en the opinion of the best conveyancers in England, and that they are all agreed."

"I have forgot none of these things, Mr. Macdonald."

"Then you've forgotten your wits, man, and come a wool-gathering here; but you'll find it won't do, Sir Charles Catline—indeed, indeed, I am ower auld a cat for sic strays as this. What is it you have gotten to say? or have you gotten anything to say that's to the purpose?"

"Sir, I have to inform you, that my sister might have made as many wills as she pleased; but that she had no title to alter the succession of the Grypherwast estate. Sir, I have to inform you, that, on looking over the family papers after her death, I lighted upon something, which in due time your own eyes shall judge of. In a word, sir, there is an old entail of her great-grandfather's. I have but to produce it, and that Vicar of Lannwell is Squire of Grypherwast to-morrow."

"An entail? and where? how? where was it recorded?—Where is the evidence of its authenticity?—How was it concealed?"

"Sir, you ask a great many very pertinent questions, and I can answer them all. The deed was never recorded, because that is not the fashion nor the law in that part of the country. The evidence of the hand-writings and stamps is perfect; and as for the concealment, why the man that executed it died suddenly; and neither his son, nor his grandson, nor his grandson's daughter, ever had any turn for examining old cabinets, and I made the discovery of it—I myself, as I told you."

"And concealed it until now?"

The Baronet nodded to Macdonald.

"I would fain see the deed, if you please. Is it far off."

"No, sir—but you shall not see it until we understand each other thoroughly. If you are satisfied with its appearance, tell me what you will do."

"That *is* a question," quoth the scribe. "You are satisfied—you say so, however. What do you mean to do?"

"Why, sir, I mean—I mean——"

"To burn it?—Out with the word, man—it's on the tip."

"If ——"

"If what? Come, come, Sir Charles. Granting all this to be as badly as you say it is, what does the whole affair amount to? Why, there are just two questions, sir. First, is this estate to belong to that parson—that Vicar—or to a daughter of yours? That's the first question. Is it a kittle ane to answer? No, no—weel, weel, let it pass. Then comes the other—Which of these young ladies is to be the heiress? Now, just cool your e'en, and look steadily at the thing for a single moment—we'll say nothing, if you please, just for this present, about other matters. What does it signify to you which of them—I mean to your purse?"

"It signifies everything. Mr. Chisney has promised to relieve me from all my embarrassments."

"Weel, weel—that's intelligible. And what if I promised you a' that, and something more to the bargain?"

"How?"

"What if my son were to marry this bonnie lassie, and go halves with you, sir, on the haill lands—do you hear me *now*, sir?"

"Ha!—Macdonald, are you serious? Let me consider—"

"Take your ain time—there's be nae hurrying from me, sir. God pity ye, what for did ye come down with that Chisney?"

"Stay, sir—if I had thought of all this—But what could I do or think, sir? Why, Macdonald, do me justice for once—Didn't I know that you had carried her off?—Might I not reasonably conclude that you would lose no time?"

"Wheesht, wheesht, man—let us have no more of this hargle-bargling about matters of no moment. What's done's done, and cannot be mended—let us think only of what is yet in our power. Thank Heaven, all *is* in our power—all—all—everything, if we only do but understand each other, and go hand in hand like men. Send off Chisney—let's be quit o' *him* at once—make any cock-and-a-bull story you will—but pack him off—pack him off directly, and then we'll buckle to the wark, and no fears, no fears we'll get through the haill o't fu' gaily yet.—No fears—not at all—but do fill your glass—do fill your glass, my dear Sir Charles."

They sat with their eyes averted from each other, now and then meeting for an instant—and but for an instant—mutually awed, equally cowards, in vain endeavouring to assume but the shadow of confidence. Macdonald had been all the while drinking. Sir Charles now at last began to follow his example. Several bumpers had been quaffed in silence, ere either of them had courage to resume the broken thread of their discourse.

Macdonald started from his reverie, and said, "My good friend, I fear the women will be wondering—you will stay supper, and we shall have an hour or two to ourselves after they are all in their beds."

"Spare me, Macdonald. I can't think of

seeing her—not just yet. No, no—do excuse me."

"Toots, toots, man—What the waur will ye be, or what the wiser will she be?"

"Your secret is confined to your own breast?"

"It is—that is, you may depend upon it, neither my wife nor Miss Hesketh has the smallest inkling of anything about it. You may depend on it, indeed."

"Your son?"

"Never heed him—never heed our Tam, he's a douce chield, whatever he looks like; and, besides, ye ken we maun hae him afterhen."

"He knows all!—O, Macdonald!"

"Wheesht, wheesht!—Ye may trust Tam—and let's hear nae mair clavers—we'll just have our bit supper, and then we'll settle everything—come awa, my dear Sir Charles."

CHAPTER LV.

THE TRUE HEIR.

It so happened, that at the moment when these two gentlemen entered the drawing-room, Mrs. Macdonald was not there. Ellen was sitting alone, stooping over an embroidering frame, and singing, in an under tone, some fragment of a melancholy old German air. The door had been opened so softly, that she neither looked up nor desisted from her song. Macdonald involuntarily halted, and Catline did so too. A crowd of bewildering thoughts came rushing over him as he gazed upon the pensive beauty. Years vanished—his Lucy, the first love of his youth, seemed to have risen in all the long-faded freshness of her prime. Even so she had looked ere sorrow had sunk deep enough to be other than an ornament, and a new grace to her loveliness—even such were the notes of her voice—even such the dark masses of luxuriant hair that hung over her brow—even such the ringlets in which his fingers had played. A mist seemed to pass before his eyes—his heart beat with a thousand long silent pulses—repentance—ay, remorse, the darkest of all human torments, heaved his bosom, and yet there was room in it for some quiverings of a softer and more tender passion—some stirrings of sweet pain—some ineffable yearnings. He had almost lost command of himself, had not his companion, whose keen glance had read the trouble of his countenance, slapped his hand forcibly upon his shoulder. Ellen started, and Mr. Macdonald, meeting her eye with inimitable composure, introduced "his friend Sir Charles Catline," to "Miss Hesketh." The thing passed just as if it had been nothing. The young lady received him with easy and innocent politeness. She spoke to him, but he answered her only in monosyllables. Macdonald broke in with his brazen notes, and laughed, and joked, and told stories, one after the other, as if afraid of a pause.

Mrs. Macdonald entered, and having been informed already what visitor her husband was engaged with, testified no surprise in seeing him. She asked a number of common-place questions, and received common-place answers. He, in his turn, inquired after the Cornet, and was told that he had gone out some time before, and would probably return immediately. Mrs. Macdonald's way of saying this excited no sort of attention in Sir Charles, yet any one that was intimate with the lady, might have detected a little uneasiness; for the truth was, that, more especially of late, the Cornet was quite unaccustomed to go from home in the evenings, and never did so without telling where he was to be, and with whom; whereas now, he had received a note in the presence of the ladies, and quitted the house immediately, without giving explanation or apology of any sort.

However, supper was soon announced, (indeed, it was by this time long after the usual supper hour of the family,) and the two ladies and the two gentlemen went down together to the parlour where it was served; for, as for Mr. Keith, he had found himself so much fatigued with Rossllynn, that he had declined quitting his chamber again that evening. During supper, Macdonald had, as before, almost all the burden of the conversation to himself. Sir Charles continued absent and silent. He eat nothing, but drank a great deal of wine and water, could scarcely command himself so far as to remove his eyes for more than a second at a time from Ellen, and altogether looked and conducted himself in a style so totally different from what Mrs. Macdonald had observed in him when she was at Little Pyesworth the preceding year, that the good lady doubted not he was either ill in health, or very much troubled with business. But the servants had scarcely left the room ere her husband gave her a well-known signal, and she obeyed, by retiring immediately—Ellen, of course, following her. Sir Charles started up as they were leaving the room, and continued with his eyes fixed upon the door for some moments after it was closed behind them. Macdonald allowed him to do so until he had filled both their glasses to the brim, and then slapping once more upon his shoulder, said,—"Come, come, Sir Charles, ye're a' in the clouds, I believe—we maun hae ae fair bumper, at ony rate, to my bonnie lassie—Here's to Miss Ellen."

"O, Macdonald," says Sir Charles, "what a day—what an evening—what an hour! O, sir, I am weary of myself and of the world. To see her!—and to see her as a stranger!—O, Macdonald, my heart is——" And he sat

down in his chair, and bowed his head upon the board, and sobbed.

Macdonald was endeavouring to soothe him, whispering in his ear, when the Cornet burst abruptly into the room. He would have withdrawn on the instant, but his father beckoned him on. "Sir Charles, my dear Sir Charles," said he, "here is your friend Thomas—Will you not speak to him?"

Catline started, and gazed with a burning blush upon the young man, whose countenance also was covered with a glow of confusion.—"Young man," said he, "advance. Here is no time for long stories—you see me—you see all, young man. It is you that must speak to Ellen—to my daughter. Alas, my poor girl! will she ever look upon her father?"

"Nay, nay," says old Macdonald, "we must not take things thus. All's well that ends well. We shall all see very happy days together yet—it will all be as it should be. Shake hands now, shake hands, and be composed, and let us a' understand ilk other."

"Young gentleman," said Catline, taking the Cornet's hesitating hand, "I fear you will scarcely do me justice—indeed I can scarcely expect it."

"You recognise your daughter?" says Thomas solemnly.

"I do," says Sir Charles—"I do."

"And her rights as such?"

"Surely, surely. Oh, sir, spare me many words. I am in your hands, spare me."

"I will join you again on the instant," said the young man, and darted out of the room.

He remained absent for perhaps a quarter of an hour—it seemed to them as if an age had passed ere he returned.

He led Ellen by the hand. Sir Charles rushed forward—the pale girl fell upon his breast.

The Cornet stood still for a moment, and then, clasping his hands together, ran up to his father. "O, sir," he whispered fervently, "you enjoy this—I see that you enjoy it!"

"My dear callant!—my dearest Thomas," was the answer, whispered as fervently as the address. He added after a moment, "Everything is right now, my dear lad. Leave them to themselves—let them take their time—no wonder if their hearts be full."

"Mine is full too, sir," said Thomas. "Oh, sir, will you forgive me for having in some sort deceived you?"

"You deceive me, Tom?—'Tis impossible!"

"I *have* deceived you."

"When? how?"

"Ellen—O, sir, she could not love me. She loves Dalton—she was betrothed to him ere we met."

"Ha! mad boy, then all is undone," and the old man shrunk back from his son, and a deadly paleness crept over his countenance. Thomas seized his hand, and pressed it to his lips.

"Be yourself, sir—be generous—be just—be a man—Dalton is here."

"Here!"

"He is here—he knows all—I have told him everything."

The old man groaned—but withdrew not his hand from his son's grasp. The father and the son stood gazing upon each other's faces.

"Let me go for him," says Thomas—"let me bring him in. Do the whole at once. Give him his bride and his birthright."

The old man's hand relaxed its hold. Thomas ran out of the room, and the next moment Reginald Dalton was within it. The Cornet drew him towards Ellen, and while her face was yet buried in her father's bosom, placed his hand in hers.

Sir Charles raised his head, and uttered a single sharp cry, and would have sunk on the ground, had not Dalton propped him up.

"Enough," said Sir Charles, with a voice of struggling agony—"Enough, enough—'tis all over—What is the world to me?—I have deserved nothing, and I have nothing. Mr. Dalton, I see how it is.—Ellen, my child, look up," and he yielded her, and Dalton kneeling received her from his hands.

"May God bless you!" said Catline, crossing her face with his hand—"May you be happy in the world, as you deserve to be. I shall not see it, but I shall know it—that—even that is more than enough.—Mr. Macdonald, will you have the goodness to give all these papers to Mr. Dalton.

Macdonald drew very slowly a large parcel from his pocket, untied the strings with which it was fastened, and unfolding the copy of Miss Dalton's will, placed it in Reginald's hand, saying, "Read it at once, sir—Read it and be satisfied."

Reginald took the paper, and making Ellen sit down by her father, advanced to the table, where the lights were, and began to read. He went over the whole while everybody kept silence. Every now and then, as he was reading, he threw a glance upon the Cornet, as if to intimate that there had been some discussion between them, and that what he was now reading confirmed him in his own opinion. At last, when he had come to the end, he deliberately folded up the packet again, and delivered it to Sir Charles.

"Why, sir?—why do you give this to me?"

"To whom else should I give it, sir? Mrs. Chisney is not here."

"Mrs. Chisney!—Why do you trifle so?" interrupted old Macdonald—"Don't you see the omission of the name?—Did not Tom tell you how it stood?"

"I did," says the Cornet.

"'Tis true," says Reginald—"I heard my friend's account of this matter; but he will bear me witness, that, from the first, I said it

could not be as he thought it was. I can easily understand how *he* should have overlooked what I cannot."

There was a pause of a moment.

"Come, gentlemen," Reginald resumed, "I have no wish to make speeches—you *must* understand all this at least as well as I do. Miss Dalton leaves her estate to Sir Charles Catline's daughter—she omits to mention the name indeed; but that was and must have been a mere clerical blunder. She says expressly, that the motive of her bequest is 'the particular love and favour for her dear niece.' What more need be?—She meant Mrs. Chisney; and I am sure I told you so, Tom, from the beginning—I am sure, that my Ellen would rather die than interfere with such a right upon such a quirk."

"A quirk?" says Mr. Macdonald, senior.

"Yes, a mere quirk," resumes Dalton—"a most visible quirk. Sir Charles Catline, speak to your daughter—ask herself—We have all our old hopes entire, and they are neither less nor less dear than they used to be."

Sir Charles sprung from his seat, cast a glowing eye upon Mr. Macdonald, and taking a roll of parchment from his bosom, said, "Young man, generous young man, you have been tried abundantly—Read this, and be happy."

Reginald hesitated. Macdonald whispered, "Ay, ay, 'tis all one thing—take it, man—take it and be thankful."

Reginald shook his head—but obeyed and unfolded the scroll. It fell from his hand, ere he had read many lines. He took it up again, and perused it to an end, and then clasping his hands together, said, "Now indeed am I happy. My father—my dear father has his right at last.—Who discovered this deed?"

Sir Charles bowed. "I—I myself—very recently—and once more may God bless you!"

Reginald laid the scroll on Ellen's lap, and Sir Charles laid her unresisting hand within her lover's.

CONCLUSION.

UNITED.

THE reader will excuse us for waiving the old ceremony of a full and circumstantial "last chapter." The sudden courage of Sir Charles Catline forsook him almost immediately. He, whose life had been artifice, could not brook the sense of his exposure—he could not bear the notion of living among those with whom his repentance, however late, would in fact be more than enough to atone for all that he had done. He wanted confidence in mankind.

Neither he nor Mr. Frederick Chisney were to be found in Edinburgh on the morning which succeeded that eventful night, and yet they had not fled together. After a scene of mutual and fierce recrimination, they had parted; and, for aught we know, they had parted for ever. Mr. Chisney, having obtained a commission, sailed to join the army in Spain in the course of a week or two afterwards, leaving his wife to partake the fortunes of her own family, and this without even putting himself to the trouble of a farewell.

The unfortunate Baronet retired without delay to the South of Ireland, where his wife and her daughters soon afterwards joined him. The Vicar of Lannwell, as soon as he had taken possession of the Grypherwast property, discharged the whole of Sir Charles's debts, and settled a very handsome annuity upon Lady Catline. They have ever since lived in very great retirement—but it is generally understood, that Sir Charles has never recovered the entire possession of himself; and that his wife and daughters, whatever lack of cordiality there might have previously been observed among them, are unwearied in their attentions upon him in this afflicted state.

The Vicar of Lannwell married Reginald and Ellen in his own parish-church, about six weeks after the discovery took place. The young people immediately after the ceremony set off by themselves for Grypherwast Hall, where, in about a week, they were joined by the Vicar and (not the least happy of the party) Mrs. Elizabeth. Mr. Keith also took up his abode under that roof shortly afterwards—and they all still continue to form one family.

Mr. Ward has been twice in Lancashire since that time—having, it would appear, come to be of opinion, that it is part of his duty to preside, not only over the funerals of Grypherwast Hall, but also over certain household solemnities of a less gloomy description. There is, indeed, some talk of his becoming Sir Charles Catline's tenant at Little Pyesworth, with the view of concluding his days in the midst of all his old allies.

THE END.

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